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THEODICY.

VOL. I.

C.

THEODICY:

ESSAYS ON DIVINE PROVIDENCE

BY

ANTONIO ROSMINI SERBATI

Translated with some omissions from the Milan Edition of 1845.

'Αγαθος ἦν, ἀγαθῷ δὲ οὐδεὶς περὶ οὐδενὸς
οὐδέποτε ἐγγίγνεται φθόνος.

—*Plato, in the "Timæus."*

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VOL. I

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*** The following translation of Rosmini's *Teodicea* is principally due to the patient labours of the late Father Fortunatus Signini.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

TO THE EDITION OF 1845.

1. THE second of the three books which form this work was published apart, with the title of *Essay*, in 1826. In 1826-27, it was reproduced together with the first, also called an *Essay*, in the collection of small treatises to which I gave the name of *Philosophical Minor Works* ("Opuscoli Filosofici"). The third is new.

All three books treat of the same subject, but under different aspects. Although each book may stand by itself, and in a certain way may be said to exhaust its own special theme, nevertheless they are mutually related in such a way that each helps to complete the others. For this reason, I have now thought it advisable to publish them together as a single work, entitled *Theodicy*.

I know of no word more suitable for designating the subject discussed throughout these pages; since *Theodicy* (from the Greek θεοῦ δίκη) signifies *Justice of God*, and this work has no other purpose than to vindicate the Equity and Goodness of God in the distribution of good and evil in the world. Hence the modern custom of taking Theodicy as synonymous with Natural

Theology, seems to me hardly in accordance with propriety of language.

2. The connexion of the three books is as follows:—The first is *Logical*, that is to say, it expounds and lays down the rules which the human mind must follow in its judgments regarding the dispositions of Divine Goodness, in order not to fall into error. It was necessary to put this book first, to remove the first cause of the errors which men commit in judging of the supreme dispositions according to which God permits evil, bestows good, and distributes both among His creatures. This cause is the *want of logical cognitions*. It shows itself in all those who hastily rush at conclusions injurious to Divine Providence and condemnatory of Its decrees, without having previously taken pains to ascertain what is the true extent of the capabilities of their reason, or inquired whether those capabilities be equal to the solution of questions so deep and intricate. In showing by what principles human reasoning ought to be guided so as not to go wrong in a matter of such great difficulty and importance, this first book points out the method of reasoning to be followed in the other two.

The second book is *Physical*, that is to say, it is a continual meditation on the laws of nature, on the essential limitations of created things, on the concatenation of causes. It is directed to combat another cause of errors respecting the dealings of Divine

Providence; I mean the *want of physical cognitions*. For, many, not considering that all created natures are essentially limited, and that the *nexus* of cause with effect follows as a consequence of the constitution of natures, and is that which produces the wonderful order and beauty of the universe, imagine that to be possible which is not so, and expect from God absurdities—things which, being in themselves impossible, indeed *nothing*, cannot be an object either of His power or of His wisdom. Hence their foolish complaints of the existence of evil, and of the mode in which evil is distributed or good dispensed. I say *foolish* complaints, because, in order to comply with their wishes, God would have to throw the whole world into confusion, or rather, as was just observed, to do what is altogether impossible. The aim, therefore, of this second book is to demonstrate that whatever has been or can be created, is limited in such a manner, that he who, to escape from certain evils, should alter the order of things as now disposed, would only be running the risk of falling into other and far greater evils; and that the sovereign goodness of the infinitely wise Author of the universe cannot propose to Itself the prevention of all evil, but only the carrying out of such an arrangement, as, when the balance between good and evil is finally struck, will secure the maximum result of net good possible. To the attainment of this end, the laws governing the distribution of good and evil

among men conspire—laws which the Creator has made known to us by Revelation, as a comfort to our weakness of understanding and pusillanimity of heart.

Lastly, the third book is *Hyper-physical*, being intended to combat the third cause of the errors common to censurers of Divine Providence, which cause lies in the *want of Theological cognitions*. These persons, having no idea of the way in which God intervenes in nature, and of the laws of action He follows in virtue of His divine attributes, pretend that He should interfere at every turn to deliver them from their miseries, even such as they have brought upon themselves by their own free act. They pretend that the calamities which cannot be avoided under the working of natural laws should at every turn be prevented by miracles, that is, by a suspension and interruption of the series of secondary causes; and this on the allegation that it would cost God nothing to do it, and would, moreover, be conformable to His infinite goodness. As a means of undeceiving these critics, it will be our duty in this third book to prove that God cannot accommodate Himself to such absurd pretensions, inasmuch as this would necessitate His acting foolishly, and therefore, in manifest opposition to that perfect and absolute goodness which essentially belongs to Him, and with which wisdom alone, but never foolishness, can be consistent. Indeed, were God by His immediate action to interfere with the course of secondary

causes, whenever they tend to evil, He would set Himself in opposition to His own attributes, would contradict Himself.

3. In thus endeavouring to uproot these three causes of error regarding Divine Providence, and in expounding the doctrines relative to It, I have not adopted a rigorously scientific style, in the hope that a freer mode of treatment might prove easier and more agreeable to the majority of readers. So likewise, I have refrained from introducing certain more difficult speculations, although I own that my mind felt almost involuntarily drawn to them by their very sublimity. As the argument seemed to be sufficiently developed without them, the desire of benefiting the greatest number seemed a sufficient reason for their omission. Should it, however, please Almighty God to grant me time and strength for publishing that part of Philosophy which is the crown and summit of a Theodicy, namely, Natural Theology, I may then supply what I have designedly omitted in this less rigorously scientific treatise; which nevertheless should itself be regarded as a branch of Natural Theology.

It is now eighteen years since the second book of this work first saw the light; and I soon after became aware that not all readers seize the drift of my thoughts, a fact of which experience has ever since continued to furnish new proofs. Those who fail most in this regard are chiefly those who blame me for being too

clear and uselessly prolix, owing to my over-anxiety not to be misunderstood. They assume towards me the tone of inexorable judges and censurers, and ascribe to me opinions which are not contained in my works, and have never entered my head. With great levity they distort my sentiments, substituting for them their own imaginings, and for the words I have used, other words of an entirely different meaning, which, with extreme ignorance, they take as synonymous, or equivalent. On this occasion, therefore, in which a new book of mine is published, I think it necessary solemnly to declare, as a caution to all men of good faith in Italy, that IN NONE OF THE BOOKS ISSUED BY MY ADVERSARIES UP TO THE PRESENT TIME IS THERE A TRUE STATEMENT OF MY THEORIES. Hence, I beg all who wish to know the truth, to take my opinions from my own works, not from those of my adversaries, in which they are not to be found.

Then follow thirteen pages, in which the Author confronts in opposite columns the text of ten passages of his own writings with the misquotations and falsifications of them contained in an article of the periodical called "La Biblioteca Italiana." These, as little suited to the present purpose, the translators have thought best to omit.

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* * * To enable the reader at a glance to know which works of Rosmini are translated into English and which are not, the Italian titles have been appended to such as have not appeared in our own tongue.

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		ERRATA.	*CORRIGE.*
PAGE	LINE		
80	17	pretend	pretend to
151	13	apparition	semblance
303		After last line, insert :	what relations he is linked with beings other than
400	13	descrimination	discrimination
420	21-2	nor in the second way, but in the third	nor in the third way, but in the second
433	20	exists	consists

ON

DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

BOOK I.

λογικός

ON THE LIMITS OF HUMAN REASON IN ITS JUDGMENTS REGARDING DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

Forsitan vestigia Dei comprehendes?

—*Job.* xi., 7.

ON
DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

THE STUDY OF THE WAYS OF PROVIDENCE COMFORTS MAN UNDER TEMPTATION.

4. Undeserving the name of Wisdom I account that kind of knowledge which has no influence on the human heart, but accumulates idly in the mind like so much dead weight, without adding to the sum of man's good, or lessening his ills, and without satisfying, or even soothing with well-grounded hopes, the ceaseless longings of his nature. (1)

Granting, then, that only the knowledge which makes us better, and strengthens us, and raises our minds to salutary thoughts, has a right to be called Wisdom; what better means could we have of acquiring so precious a treasure, than pondering on the Eternal Counsels apparent in the vicissitudes of

(1) On the nature of Wisdom see Rosmini's Essay *On the Notion of Wisdom* ("Dell' Idea della Sapienza") in the volume entitled *Introduction to Philosophy* ("Introduzione alla Filosofia").—*Translators' Note.*

created things, and endeavouring to bring our own lives into harmony with them?

5. All the dangers and temptations which imperil man's fidelity to virtue, are, it seems to me, due to one sole cause, viz., the trouble and difficulty which man experiences in steadfastly adhering to the path of duty, in a state which deprives him of many enjoyments and subjects him to manifold suffering. Sensible good lures his appetite to such a degree that, through greed of possessing it, he forgets the law of righteousness; suffering has so saddening and depressing an influence on him, that in the hope of ridding himself of the galling burden, or at least of escaping from the extreme vexation of having his inclinations thwarted, he abandons himself to evil. But no sooner has he done so, than the stern voice of conscience rebukes him for having allowed his affections to deceive him, and for having violated that unbending law which fixes certain limits to the indulgence as well of human desires as of human aversions. Then there arises within him a fierce battle between two contrary forces: the incorruptible conscience, which, as a heavenly herald, unceasingly proclaims in his heart the divine legislation; and the bent of sensible nature, which, blind to the light of truth, will hear of nothing but what is agreeable and delightful to itself. This struggle continues until at last it comes to pass, that either he is brought back to virtue, or, being too faint-hearted to regain the mastery, becomes hardened in evil.

6. Now it is when a man has settled down in this lamentable state of moral perversion, that his mind enfeebled and unhappy, is apt to be led astray by

harbouring sinister thoughts against the high dispositions of Divine Providence. (1)

The ills that befall him, and the restrictions imposed on sensuous gratifications, are to him a source of endless annoyance and discontent. Unable to find a means of assuaging this misery, he casts the blame of it upon that God Who is the Supreme Disposer of all human things, and has, to the sinner's chiefest discomfort, graven on the inner tablets of the heart that solemn unalterable command: "Turn away from evil, and do good." Wretched is the man fallen into so deplorable an error, who has not the mental strength to understand that the bounds set to present enjoyments are rather apparent than real, wisely ordained by the best of legislators to the end that we may, at a most trifling sacrifice, hereafter secure an unstinted fulness of all that we can desire.

7. This doctrine is so consoling, that we ought to look upon it as good, and as such, embrace it with our hearts, even though our minds do not fully comprehend its truth. Happy, however, are they, who can

(1) The influence of the passions on men's judgments has been well expressed in the axiom: *Unusquisque judicat prout affectus est;* which agrees in substance with the English Proverb: "The wish is father to the thought."

St. Augustine has said: "Be it known and understood that there would have been no error in Religion if man had not worshipped as his God, his own soul, or his body, or the desires of his fancy." *(De Vera Relig.* Ch. x., no. 18.) And in the 38th Chapter of the same book, no. 69, speaking of Infidel reasoners, he uses language equally strong, if not stronger. Hence one of the principal obstacles which stand in the way of rectifying the judgments of those in error, is the difficulty of rectifying their affections; for "Wisdom will not enter a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins." (Wisdom, 1. 4.) But, as Christianity teaches, in order to rectify disordered affections, something more is necessary than mere human reasoning.—On the nature of human error, its causes, and its remedies, see *The Origin of Ideas,* from no. 1245 to 1377.—*Tr.*

not only desire or believe it, but also understand it. Does the infinitely wise Legislator, perchance, forbid us to investigate the reasons of the laws whereby He dispenses good and evil, if we are competent to do so? On the contrary, he invites us all thereto.

8. But if our minds are unable to soar so high, what then? Shall we have the audacity to dispute in all things with the Divine Intelligence? Or rather, should we not seek to render ourselves partakers of God's own Wisdom through Faith? Let us strengthen our weakness by a firm reliance on the words of our Creator, which so strongly urge upon us abstinence and patience: abstinence from momentary delights, by reminding us of the eternal punishment prepared for intemperance, and patience under momentary sufferings, by promising us, in return for it, ineffable and eternal joys. (1) Nevertheless, it is, as I have said, perfectly lawful for every one to try, as best he may, to find out the sublime reasons of the government of Divine Providence:—a government wholly directed to the advantage of the good, who for love of righteousness often sacrifice sensible enjoyments, and willingly sub-

(1) It will be observed that the purpose of this work is not to prove directly the existence of God and of Christian Revelation. The author takes both these things for granted. But if an intelligent reader, who is animated by the pure love of truth, happens to be an unbeliever, there can be but little doubt that by following closely the Author's reasonings he will find in them such a cumulative mass of evidence, though indirect, in favour of the truth of both, as to make him feel that it would be very irrational of him to continue in his unbelief. If it were necessary, not a few cases could be mentioned of strong, clear-headed Italian thinkers, who, after falling into religious scepticism by drawing strictly logical deductions from the principles of the prevalent false philosophies taught them in their youth, have been reclaimed to Christian Faith and life by an attentive and serious perusal of the works of this Author.—*Tr.*

mit to sufferings; and to the confusion of sinners, whom Providence blesses with many good things, and protects from many evils, in such wise, however, as to leave to their own free will the power of preferring virtue to pleasure, or suffering to sin.

CHAPTER II.

GOD INVITES MAN TO THE STUDY OF THE WAYS OF PROVIDENCE BY SETTING BEFORE HIM THE BOOK OF NATURE AND OF HISTORY.

9. The consideration of the plan which God follows in instructing mankind has often excited in me a thrill of sublime emotion. That plan consists in permitting that doubts, or rather difficulties, should arise in men's minds, in order that men may be roused to action, and moved to reflection and the investigation of truth.

We may imagine all this universe, both physical and moral, as a grand and sacred book opened by God before men's eyes, and full of queries and problems for the mind of man to solve, and so to increase the store of his knowledge and contentment. The pages of the great volume are unfolded gradually in the course of centuries:—the multiplication of the human race, its division into divers peoples, the dispersion of these peoples over the face of the earth, then in succession their mutual relations, their wars, their rivalries, their alliances; and in particular the history of the Jewish People, which God directed with a peculiar Providence, intending to make it a figure, on a small scale, of what the entire human race was destined to be at a later period. The problems found in the earlier pages of this book are more easy to solve than those which come

after; nor is a new page ever opened until man has succeeded in deciphering those that precede.

It seems as if Infinite Wisdom delighted in adopting with human beings the process known as the Socratic Method, by which the most difficult truths are easily elicited from the lips of illiterate persons and of children; the secret simply consisting of a few interrogatives skilfully arranged in a certain order. In this way, I believe, does God act towards His creatures. He ordains that things which are marvellous, and wholly at variance with their modes of thinking, should happen before the eyes of men, that being struck with wonder at the novelty, they may feel prompted to direct their attention to investigating the hidden causes of things. He does not wish to say everything Himself, because, being good, He does not wish His beloved creature, man, to remain idle and inert, or to be deprived of the noble gratification and merit which he can gain by instructing himself in many things. To this end, He has endowed man with the faculty of knowing, that he may enjoy the honest pleasure of developing knowledge for himself, of being in part his own teacher. God would not assist him save in that for which his natural knowledge could not suffice. And what was this?

1st Man's faculty of knowing required to be stimulated and roused so as to be drawn forth into its own peculiar act;

2nd To progress in the wisdom necessary to man, this faculty required to have suitable queries or interrogations put to it by its Supreme Instructor;

3rd And it likewise required to be furnished with

some general principles, to enable it, by their application, to arrive at the right answers to those questions.

Furnished with these aids, man would be in a position to form for himself a science of a truly ennobling character. God provided him with them, and, having done so, left him, as I have said, freely to enjoy the honest and noble delight of being the author of his own wisdom.

CHAPTER III.

HE WHO BELIEVES IN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD CAN HAVE NO VALID REASON FOR BEING DISTURBED IN MIND ON ACCOUNT OF THE DIFFICULTIES PRESENTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF PROVIDENCE. HE LOVES, HOWEVER, TO PONDER ON THOSE DIFFICULTIES, THAT HE MAY BETTER KNOW THE GREATNESS OF GOD.

10. The very objections, then, the very difficulties, which the government of Divine Providence presents, are of advantage to man, and might be regarded as a sign and gift of Providence itself; provided only that on meeting with such enigmas, which after all are merely the result of his own ignorance, he do not, like a coward, shrink from their encounter, giving himself up at once for vanquished, and so prove unfaithful to that Supreme Goodness which would have made use of this very means to enlighten him.

For so, in truth, is it wont to happen, that by being brought face to face with the like problems, men of upright heart are led to investigate and to discover the mighty secrets of Divine Providence. Firm in the belief of the existence of a Supreme and Infinite Being, they never doubt the goodness and wisdom of His rule. No difficulty, however impossible to solve by the aid of mere reason, can in the least degree shake the constancy of their faith, or cool the ardour of their love for that infallible Lord. Still,

they love to meditate on those difficulties with a view to their solution; for it is precisely by penetrating into the depths of those wonderful ways by which God works out His designs, that man comes to understand how immeasurably the Divine Greatness transcends human littleness.

11. The delight which a wise man experiences in endeavouring to penetrate into reasons like these, is similar to, though of course far exceeding, that which is felt in scanning the conduct of some great man, who by vastness of genius, prowess, and sagacity in counsel, was immensely in advance of all his contemporaries. How pleasing it is to note the grand aims of such a man's enterprises, and the extraordinary and novel means whereby he achieved success! The less apparently fit—nay, the more obviously unfit these means appear for the attainment of the end in view, and the more unexpectedly and happily that end and the whole enterprise was accomplished, the greater is the delight afforded by the study of the singular and altogether exceptional ways by which it was brought about. How pleasing to identify one's own with those wonderfully sagacious and far-reaching views, which, before they were justified by the event, would perhaps have been condemned by everybody as eccentric, if not utterly preposterous!

Now, if even man when gifted with superior genius or character, very frequently acts in a way quite different from that which would be pursued by other men, and which they sometimes think wrong or foolish, need we wonder if the Infinitely Wise Ruler of the universe very often disposes events in a manner which we find it hard to conceive, and which seems to us

absurd, merely because it is wholly at variance with our own notions of things?

12. All that is demanded of us in this matter, therefore, is that we should treat God with the same respectful consideration which we very readily show towards great men. We say that a great man, an extraordinary genius, seems to be free from the restraint of common laws. We call an artist, a painter, a poet, original, for the very reason that he has been able to strike out for himself a path never before trodden by anyone—in other words, because, leaving behind him all vulgar precepts as suited only to insufficiently secure intellects, he has raised himself on the powerful wings of an inspired nature, to flights which till then it would have been thought rash or impossible to attempt. Does this mean that he withdrew himself from subjection to the eternal rules? No; he only withdrew himself from subjection to such rules as were known to the men of his time, who, accustomed to measure everything by these alone, set down as foolish or abnormal, not merely what fell below that standard, but also what rose to an order one degree above it. (1)

(1) Peter Bayle, having set forth the objections which the existence of evil suggests against Divine Providence, concluded by saying that he thought them unanswerable. Leibnitz, in his defence of Divine Providence, showed that the reason why Bayle could not extricate himself from those difficulties was because he had recourse to cavil instead of Logic. Among the many excellent things which Leibnitz said on this subject, we have the distinction of the arguments which can be brought against a given truth into *demonstrative* arguments, and *apparent and conjectural* ones; and he proved that to overthrow a truth which is certain either from reason or from faith, as for example the wisdom and goodness of God, no *conjectural and apparent* arguments are of any force, but only *demonstrative* arguments. Now no demonstrative argument against the Divine Attributes has ever been produced. "We have no need of a supernatural revelation" (says this great man) "in

order to know that there is one only principle of all things, perfectly good and perfectly wise. Reason gives us infallible demonstrations of this; consequently, all objections drawn from the imperfections which we observe in the way in which things proceed in the universe rest merely on fallacious appearances. For, if we could only understand the universal harmony, we should see that what we are tempted to blame is part of the design most worthy to be chosen; in one word, we should see, and not merely believe, that what God has done is the best." Whence he also infers that Bayle's attempt to represent *reason* as being in contradiction with *Faith* is a blunder; since, if his argument had any value, it would rather set reason in contradiction with itself. He wisely adds: "When there is question of opposing reason to an article of our Faith, objections amounting to mere likelihood need not give us any trouble; for, all the world agrees that mysteries are against appearances, and do not at all look like truth when viewed on the side of reason; but it is enough that they contain no absurdity. Therefore, to refute them, demonstrations are necessary. This is, doubtless, the meaning of Holy Scripture when it declares that 'the wisdom of God is foolishness before men,' and when St. Paul remarks that the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST 'is folly to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews.' Clearly, truth cannot contradict truth, and the light of reason is a gift of God no less than the light of Revelation. Hence it is an approved principle in sound Theology, that the 'grounds of credibility' *(Motiva credibilitatis)* establish once for all the authority of Holy Scripture before the tribunal of reason, which thenceforth implicitly accepts the teaching of that authority notwithstanding all apparent arguments to the contrary.—One of the causes by which Bayle may have been induced to believe that the objections brought by reason against Faith could not be answered, is, that he seemed to be under the impression that God must be justified in a way similar to that which we see usually adopted when an accused party is defended before a human judge. But he forgot to reflect that at the tribunals of men, who cannot always get at positive truth, it is often necessary to decide the case upon probabilities and *likelihoods*, and in very great part upon *presumptions* or *preconceptions;* whereas it is, as we have always said, agreed by all that mysteries, although true, have not the appearance of truth" *(Discours de la conformité de la foi avec la raison)*. And the merit of Faith consists precisely in this, that we, on God's word, believe that to be *true* which does not look like truth. Now, to know what God's word is, we have the "grounds of credibility," which, taken in their entirety, form a most complete demonstration.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DIFFICULTIES PRESENTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE SPRING FROM TWO SOURCES, VIZ., 1. THE *INFINITE WISDOM* DIRECTING THAT GOVERNMENT, AND 2. THE *COMPARATIVE IGNORANCE* OF MAN.

13. It is chiefly for the reason expressed in this heading that God-fearing men remain firm and constant in faith and in their love of the Supreme Being, even in the midst of tribulations. No accident, no reverse, however sudden, painful, contrary to our ways of thinking, and, apparently, even to the Divine Perfections, can have the least power to make us waver in our faith in those Divine attributes, when once we have well fixed in our minds the following very simple truth:—

God, being essentially possessed of an intelligence infinitely superior to ours, must naturally proceed in a way differing from, and far wiser than, ours; His rules of action must be such as, at the outset, appear to our short-sighted minds opposed, or at least ill-suited, to His purposes. If in His works He were merely to follow a mode of thinking like that of man, we should have no sign whereby to know and admire His Wisdom. Our minds would no longer be able to ascend from the traces of Divine Wisdom impressed on creatures to the Creator Himself. Finding in things and events nothing but a ray of wisdom, uniform and

commensurate with man's own, we could indeed infer from it that an intelligence governs the universe, but only an intelligence limited as that of man is; and thus there would be an end to our conception of the existence of God, the Infinite Intelligence.

No wonder, then, that on looking at the course of the universe, and especially at the distribution of good and evil, our little minds should be struck with astonishment at many occurrences which at first sight seem wholly incomprehensible. These difficulties must arise from the very nature of the case; and so far are they from militating against the belief in the existence of an all-providing God, that, but for them, it would be impossible for us to believe that any Divinity at all presided over the government of human vicissitudes. Hence such difficulties are themselves a proof of a Universal and Divine Providence.

14. It may also be shown in other ways that problems must occur to man's mind, when he undertakes to judge of the government of the universe according to those little rules by which he is accustomed to judge of his own private concerns.

A kingdom cannot be governed by the same rules as would be found amply sufficient for the good management of a small family. For a similar reason, therefore, it is impossible to judge aright of the government of the universe by the narrow conceptions belonging to us mortals. Human thought has, besides its natural limitations, another limitation due to education and habit. Man can never be free from the former, and it is very difficult for him to rid himself of the latter; for as almost every act of his life is restricted by it, it has become as it were second nature to him.

Why is it, for example, we observe such diversities in men's ideas and judgments, that it would hardly be possible to meet with any two individuals who think exactly alike on all subjects? Is it because of a difference in the first principles of reason impressed on each man by nature? Assuredly not; for as regards first principles, all men, when once they have agreed in the meaning of the words they use, are found to be perfectly at one. Must we, then, attribute this fact to the inequalities existing in men's mental powers, in consequence of which one man is able, on a given subject, to see further than another? This alone does not seem sufficient to account for all the divergencies in question. Because one man sees further than another, it does not follow that the two must be in mutual contradiction. They see different, not contrary, things. One perceives what the other does not perceive, but the two perceptions are not necessarily opposed to each other. These contrarieties in the judgments passed on the same things, or on the means to be chosen for the attainment of the same end, can only be fully explained by taking into account the varieties of those *secondary rules* which men form for themselves, and by which they are guided in their estimates of things. And these rules vary, not merely according to the various degrees of their intelligence, and the various affections by which their attention is influenced, but principally according to their various experiences, and the wider or narrower sphere of affairs with which they have had severally to deal. Thus, a thrifty housewife, who has always made it a point to be very particular about even the smallest domestic savings, will probably regard as a wanton extravagance

those larger outlays which her husband decides upon as necessary, and, in fact, considers quite moderate and reasonable, for maintaining the proper position of the family, or for the dispatch of some important business. Both, of course, agree on the general principle of consulting economy and avoiding prodigality. But the wife judges of the case by a rule which she has drawn from her habit of handling only small sums; whereas the husband's rule is based on the better knowledge he has of the entire income of the household which he governs. Hence their disagreement. Let it be well understood: the secondary rules vary, because they are the result of comparison. The greatness or littleness of an object, its importance or insignificance, its nobleness or meanness, its utility or hurtfulness, are, in men's judgments, most frequently relative things. Hence almost every one has special *secondary rules* of his own; hence also different opinions and conflicting views.

Moreover, even men engaged in more or less the same affairs are very often found to be of contrary opinions as to the best way of conducting those affairs; and this not merely on account of the different degrees of their intelligence, or of their different moral dispositions, but also because a mere change of circumstances within the same sphere of action is enough to accustom one to look at things from a different point of view, to see them, as it were, in a different light. Indeed, can we find anywhere a man who, be he ever so prudent, can escape all criticism, all censure? who finds all other men of his condition agreeing with him in every thing? What wonder, therefore, if disagreements are rife among men who have been

differently brought up? if he who is accustomed to a wider sphere of action does not think like another who is accustomed to a narrower sphere, and whose notions of things are therefore narrowed in proportion? What wonder if they disapprove of each other's conduct and tax each other with imprudence? Ought not these plain matter-of-fact observations to be quite enough to silence those who pretend to find fault with the divinely-ordained distribution of good and evil in the world?

To a person of this class I should say—"May I ask you to reflect for a moment on what takes place with regard to your own self? Tell me, can you ever succeed, do what you will, in escaping every kind of blame from all and each of your fellow men, or in securing from all and each the approval of your conduct, even in those matters in which it seems to you that you have acted most wisely? and yet the range of your activity is so insignificant as compared with that of the entire universe! It ought, therefore, to be infinitely easier, within so small a sphere, to know what is best. Pray, then, why do you not agree with the rest of men? Have they not the same nature and the same origin? and are they not possessed of as good a right to the free exercise of their own judgment as you could ever claim? Now if you believe yourself entitled to demand that God should dispose things according to your way of thinking, why can they not equally demand that He should dispose the same according to *their* way of thinking, which, nevertheless, is entirely at variance with yours, even in the trifling concerns of every day life?"—Simple as this reasoning is, I do not see how its cogency could be evaded.

15. But we will for argument's sake suppose that the Ruler of the universe were a man, or thought in human fashion—that he were, for example, one of the boldest detractors of Divine Providence. I ask: would this put an end to all dissatisfaction? Would it do away with all other detractors? One must indeed have lost his senses, not to see that the government of the universe is a task immeasurably transcending all the powers of the human mind, and that, were God to hand over the reins of that government to any man for a single instant, everything would fall into absolute confusion. The temerity of him who would not hesitate to receive such a charge seems to have been expressed by the ancients in the fable of the son of Clymene, who having obtained his father's leave to guide the chariot of the Sun for one day, at once left the track, with the result that the heavens and the earth would have been consumed in a tremendous conflagration, had not Jupiter come quickly to the rescue, by striking him with a thunderbolt, and precipitating him into the river Po. If then no sane man could presume to imagine himself capable of undertaking so vast a government as that of the universe, and since, even if he were capable, he could have no hope of seeing his rule approved by all his fellow men, how can any one dare to constitute himself a judge of the Divine Ruler, when the mere fact of this discrepancy of opinions proves to him that he ought to be modest even in judging his equals?

Let the arguments, then, against Divine Providence be as numerous as they may, we can never reasonably take them for anything more than mere plausibilites. Nothing can be deduced from them

which is really derogatory to Its supreme dispositions. Much less can they afford a ground for doubting either the existence of God or His attributes. I have often admired the Teutonic good nature which the great Leibnitz exhibited by dwelling so long on the refutation of Bayle's sophisms, and on the defence of the conformity of Faith with Reason.

I will only add that the inefficacy of the apparent arguments against Divine Providence is seen still more clearly, if we consider that the Mind which governs the world must be most wise and infallible, not like the human mind, which is subject to error.

CHAPTER V.

EVERY DIFFICULTY AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE, WHEN SOLVED, DISPELS MAN'S IGNORANCE; WHEN ADORED, IT ENHANCES HIS VIRTUE.

16. But let us for a while set aside this consideration, and turn back to the fact already mentioned, that the *secondary rules* of judgment, drawn from a narrower circle of experience, differ from those founded on one that is wider.

I ask: can all these rules, so discordant from one another, be at one and the same time equally true and complete? To say this would be a contradiction; but each of them will be at once true and false: true so long as it is applied to matters falling within that sphere of things from which it was drawn; false if applied to things lying outside that sphere. It follows that such secondary rules as were drawn from a larger experience and a wider sphere of action will be available for judging aright of a greater number and of a more extended order of things, than are the more limited and restricted rules. Those only will be finally complete which are founded on the observation of all the component parts of the universe, considered in their mutual relations; for, as from this grand sphere nothing would be excluded, so, in the formation of such rules, no possible experience would be want-

ing; every species as well as every accident would be taken into account and, as it were, set face to face in a universal comparison. Now, in this we can see a fresh reason why virtuous men, when meeting with those difficulties which are apt to suggest themselves to the mind in the consideration of the manner in which human sorrows and human happiness are apportioned by Providence, instead of giving way to sadness or discouragement, feel internally moved to rejoice. Indeed, if one of these upright and faithful men happens to observe anything difficult to understand, and so contrary to all his expectations that it suggests strangeness of action on the part of God, he is filled with sentiments of heartfelt gratitude; for in the very darkness of that deep secret of Divine Wisdom he sees a reminder of his own nothingness before God, and of the immense abyss which lies between the judgments of the Creator and of His creature. That ray of Divine Greatness gladdens him beyond measure. Nevertheless he meditates diligently and hopefully on that secret, trying to search out those reasons which are at present hidden from his view; for he is persuaded, that should it please God to discover them to him in any degree, the narrow borders of his human understanding will be thereby immensely enlarged, and the cramped maxims of human prudence corrected, by the infinite breadth of the Wisdom of God.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF EXPLAINING DIVINE PROVIDENCE MAY BE OVERCOME IN TWO WAYS, VIZ., BY *FAITH* AND BY *REASON*.

17. God does not disappoint the desire of those men who, in an upright and humble spirit, search carefully, in order that they may partake of and delight in His eternal wisdom. He imparts to them abundance of light to see into those sublime reasons according to which He disposes events. If He still keeps the profoundest depths of His counsels veiled in part from them, this is only that they may have opportunities of showing their Faith in Him, and enriching themselves more and more with the high merit of a perfect submission to His adorable decrees.

From all that we have said thus far it is clear that we may appropriately distinguish two ways in which it is possible for man to rid himself of all perplexities or doubts in regard to Divine Providence, that of Faith, and that of Reason.

18. The first is broad, very simple, and open to all. A religious man, assured by his own reason, but at the same time strengthened in that assurance by the power which a firm Faith infuses into him, holds that He Who governs the universe is an Infinite Being, all-wise, all-powerful, all-just, all-good. Hence, in all accidents, in all trying encounters, he tranquilly reposes

in that Being. Nothing disturbs him, nothing comes to him as a surprise. No matter how painful, no matter how far beyond his comprehension, all that happens is ever, in his intimate conviction, a Divine Work; and this simple truth is more than enough for him. All possible objections vanish before this one word: THERE IS A GOD.

CHAPTER VII.

FAITH IS APPROVED BY REASON, AND ADDS STRENGTH TO MAN'S UNDERSTANDING.

19. Although Faith has the advantage of tranquillizing the human mind, might not one say that it is itself a weakness unworthy of serious, thinking men?

Such indeed is Faith supposed to be by the free-thinker, who therefore looks down upon it with contempt; but such it does not appear when judged in the light of calm, dispassionate reason.

Reason declares Faith to be deserving of the highest praise, and feels bound to acknowledge that it raises man to a greatness of soul which it would be vain to expect from mere human learning.

To be convinced of this, confining ourselves to our case, we have only to place clearly before our minds the true state of the question. Here is an undeniable truth which is taught by reason itself, viz., the existence of God. The question is: How this truth can be so impressed on the heart of man as to make him cling to it with perfect consistency of thought and of will, so that he shall never contradict himself in his reasonings, never waver, never give place to error through weakness of mind or heart. Now, let us suppose a man who has firmly and once for all fixed in his heart the conviction that there is a God of infinite

wisdom and goodness, Who governs the world; could this man ever think of entertaining any doubt as to the propriety of that government? On the other hand, if he were to give way to the doubt, would not this be a manifest proof that he has been wanting to his own reason, by allowing himself, through cowardice, to swerve from that truth which his reason presented to him? Now, it is exactly here that Faith comes to man's aid by its invigorating influence. For Faith, I mean Christian Faith, demands, while at the same time it infuses, a marvellous spiritual energy, an energy far greater than could ever emanate from truth as known by reason alone. So true is this, that reason, finding man too feeble to embrace and practise her own direct teachings, tries to stay him up, and, as it were, to entice and allure him by secondary considerations which are in themselves merely relative and accessory.

20. Now let me ask: is it not great strength of character which enables a man by a single general principle to govern his entire life, and without need of any further support, to be always consistent, to vanquish all doubts, to master all obstacles, to show himself proof against all the subtleties and all the allurements of the passions? (1) It is a fact of every day experience, that the weaker a person happens to be in mind and character, the more does he require to be sustained by a variety of encouragements and *accessory reasons* that shall keep him steadfast to moral principle. You cannot usually govern children and persons of the weaker sex by those few and solid reasons which

(1) This subject is admirably treated by St. John Chrysostom in his 8th Homily on the Epistle to the Romans.

suffice for a man. Any little pleasure, any little pain, any sensible affection, is enough to make them forget the reasons which they have indeed heard, but which have not sunk deep into their breasts. The slight impression which abstract truth makes on them, and their consequent incapacity to make practical applications of it, and, on the other hand, the force which sensible things exert on their soft and elastic fibres, reduce to almost nothing the effective energy of those feeble understandings. This is in substance what constitutes moral weakness in individuals. An unmistakable symptom thereof is to find that general principles, although understood for the moment, have but little power to direct their lives. You must give them a great number of accessory and partial reasons, to prop them up, as it were, on all sides. To attempt to solve all their difficulties at once by one comprehensive answer would be a mere waste of time. Each difficulty must be met singly with a particular solution of its own, and that solution exactly suited to their peculiar disposition. Nothing else will satisfy them.

If what we have said be true, how pitiable an exhibition is that which those sophists make of themselves, who, under the pretence of standing up for the rights of human reason, and from a proud ambition, it would seem, to measure their strength with the Most High, are ever eager to argue with excessive minuteness about the events of the universe, and to go on without end discussing with Him reason for reason, as if He were a sophist like themselves! What is this in reality but showing their own intellectual and moral weakness? Indeed, if, as we have said, weak and nerveless characters are unmistakably known by this,

that, being unable in cases of difficulty to feel the force of a general reason, they require a great number of partial and minute reasons, in order to be satisfied, I very willingly leave it to the reader to judge what is to be thought of these vain men who, with a loquacity that seems irrepressible, are perpetually finding fault with almost everything which God disposes in the world. How strange that they should have arrogated to themselves the pompous title of *esprits forts!* Their vanity would only excite ridicule, were it not for the violence, the cruelty, the ferocity, which they wreak on their too patient fellow-creatures. (1)

Thank God, then, that there are men upright, true, and faithful, who by simple Faith in His existence and in His attributes vanquish the world. Although the world thinks them simple-minded and deficient in good sense, yet it is to them that true manliness of character and vigour of intellect really belong. One principle alone, viz., the existence of God, one belief alone, the belief in His word, avails them far more than all the noisy science of men. One truth alone, shining vividly upon them, and supreme, is enough to direct them under all possible circumstances. Through the force of this truth their intellect never wavers, their spirit is always at peace, their reason always holds sway, and to their will, ever in conformity with that of God, the world itself is obedient.

How often has it seemed to me that the whole

(1) The Author here refers to the motley crowd of so-called Philosophers of the Voltairian School, the out-pourings of whose blasphemous and flippant literature, as well as the miseries and the blood with which they at last flooded Europe, were still fresh in the mind of the public at the time in which he, then very young, was writing this first book.—*Tr.*

difference between great and extraordinary men, and those of the common stamp, consists after all in nothing else than a greater degree of that interior strength of which I am speaking! Great and lasting enterprises cannot be conceived except by a man who is dominated by few but lofty principles. It is the force of these which elevates and ennobles his whole spirit. Under their influence, just as if, to use an ancient Greek phrase, a Divinity were speaking to him, he abandons himself to schemes full of counsel, almost without taking counsel. A stranger to hesitation, he goes his way undauntedly in the midst of dangers, caring for nothing but the high aim on which his thoughts are fixed; and so he conquers men and even nature. Whence all this? Simply from that constant uniformity of action, and that sentiment, which add so mysterious and irresistible a power to the few but universal conceptions which are his guide.

Thus is the Christian man constantly dominated by one grand idea, which by its universality embraces and absorbs into itself all other ideas. To say that the Divinity Itself works in him, through the light of this idea, is not by any means a mere dream of the ancient Greeks. By the energizing virtue of this idea, and that imperturbable firmness which it produces, he rises far above all other men, who, wearied under the immense burden of untrustworthy human cognitions, and tossed to and fro in continual uncertainties, often lose heart, and sometimes even fall into despair.

CHAPTER VIII.

BY ABUSING *REASON*, SOME TURN IT TO THEIR OWN RUIN.

21. But as the way of Faith is justly entitled to praise, inasmuch as it so strengthens man's spirit that he can with imperturbable calm of mind adore what he does not understand in the dealings of Divine Providence, so the way of reason also may turn out to be of very great advantage to a man who follows it with an upright spirit.

22. By *way of reason* I mean that mental process whereby we seek to find out the particular reasons according to which Supreme Providence disposes of created things.

23. This, however, is an abstruse and difficult way, and few can venture upon it with safety.

For it can be followed in three different modes, or rather it branches out as it were into three several paths; hence the fruit which we reap, for good or evil, from applying ourselves to the investigation of the sublime rules followed by Providence in Its government, varies very widely according to the different modes which we adopt in the inquiry.

24. The first mode of using our reason in reference to the dealings of Providence, or the first of the three subordinate paths just mentioned, is followed by those who search into the Divine dispositions with an evil

heart, in a hostile, haughty spirit, as if their sole desire were to discover in those dealings something to condemn, and hence catch at a pretext for denying, or at least misrepresenting, that God Whom they love not, but of Whom, to their extreme anguish, they are continually in dread.

25. To these unhappy men, who seem ever bent on discovering, if possible, some excuse for thinking that there is no God, knowledge yields a sad and poisonous fruit. It only serves to envelop them in a profound darkness of perpetual doubt, in which, deprived of every cheering ray of truth, they have nothing to console them but the fitful and lurid flashes of a troubled imagination. Of that wisdom which gives motion and life to the universe, they every day understand less and less; and the Deity from Whom that vital wisdom flows they bitterly and tremblingly blaspheme.

How much happier is the condition of the humble and despised believer than that of haughty sciolists! It is they who are answerable, if the noble gift of reason, if knowledge, which is so abundant a source of consolation, has now-a-days fallen so low in general estimation.

26. Indeed, it is not reason, it is not knowledge, that is hurtful to humanity, but the vices of men who foolishly turn to their own injury the highest and best gifts of heaven. "The study of the universe" (says Rousseau) "ought, I well know, to raise man up to his Creator; but it only sets off human vanity. The philosopher, imagining that he can penetrate into the Divine secrets, dares to associate his pretended wisdom with that of the Eternal. He approves, he

blames, he corrects, he prescribes laws to nature and limits to the Deity. But while, occupied with his vain systems, he racks his brains in the attempt to re-adjust the machine of the universe, the simple rustic who sees the rain and the sun fertilize his field at regular seasons, admires, praises, and blesses the Hand that bestows these favours on him, without troubling himself as to the manner in which they come about. He does not seek to justify his ignorance or his vices by his unbelief. He does not censure the works of God, nor make war upon his Lord in order to parade his own sufficiency. Never will the impious word of Alphonsus X. fall from the lips of an illiterate man: only a learned tongue could utter such a blasphemy. While cultured Greece was teeming with atheists, no barbarian, as Ælian observes, had ever called the existence of God into doubt. We may observe the same thing at this day, for there is in all Asia but one people versed in letters, and half of this people is atheist. This is the only nation in Asia in which atheism is known." (1)

27. By what deplorable misfortune came it to pass that this man, who knew and could describe so well the illusions of vain science, did not know how to guard himself from them? How was it that one who so thoroughly understood the noble end of the study of the universe, and how it ought to raise man to the knowledge of his Creator, afterwards abused this study, if not to deny the Deity, to misrepresent It at least, by denying Its Providence as regards the particular objects of the universe? Who could have thought that he who had praised the pious rustic, because,

(1) *Réponse au Roi de Pologne*, etc.

with a heart fully convinced of what true wisdom is, he raises his hands to heaven in thanksgiving to the Almighty Who sends the sun and the rain to fertilize his fields, would with the same hand write words like these?—"We must believe that the particular events of this sublunary world are nothing in the eyes of the Lord of the universe; that His Providence is only universal, and that He is content with preserving the genera and the species, without troubling Himself about the way in which each individual passes through this fleeting life."(1) Alas! what is man, if he is subject to such glaring, such fatal contradictions? What is man's wisdom, if, when blinded by the passions, he disowns and denies what, but a little while before, he saw and confessed?

(1) *Lettre à M. de Voltaire*, etc.

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CHAPTER IX.

BY TRUSTING SOLELY TO *REASON*, SOME ENDANGER THEIR OWN SALVATION.

28. This way of using the human intelligence, therefore, is much to be dreaded, leading, as it does, evil-disposed men to terrible falls. It is of such that the Scripture says: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject. Where is the wise? Where is the Scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1)

On the other hand, the study of the invisible attributes of the Creator as revealed in that Wisdom which shines forth in creatures might lead a man to the knowledge of truth, even though he were not yet imbued with true piety, provided only he be not enslaved to evil passions.

29. I say *might*, because the thing is by no means certain. Human reason, although the offspring of the Divine, is, when left to itself, short-sighted and liable to error. Not that the light of reason is itself fallible; but man is fallible who makes use of and applies it. Accordingly he who, either freely or of necessity, has made it a rule for himself to follow no other guide than his own reason, may or may not read correctly the

(1) Isa. xxix. 14; 1 Cor. i. 19, 20.

traces which all things bear of the Wisdom that rules them. He may encounter difficulties of so serious a nature as to disturb his evenness of mind and place in jeopardy the success of his investigations. It is a mere venture, a game of hazard, in which he commits his all to the caprice of fortune, and risks the loss of it. Is it not a mere accident that the difficulties which occur to him against Divine Providence should be proportionate to the strength of his understanding?

30. Of a truth, it is purely a matter of accident that an individual should have received from nature a larger or smaller amount of mental vigour. This amount, always an unknown quantity to him, is in no way dependent on him, and is just so much as nature has bestowed, not a fraction more. How, then, can any one prudently abandon himself to the guidance of his reason alone? Is not this the same as committing one's destinies to blind chance? Some may perhaps wonder at my saying that the amount of our own mental vigour "is always an unknown quantity to us, and in no way dependent on us;" yet, singular as it may appear, it is none the less a simple, undeniable fact.

31. The power of the instrument by which we know all other things always remains, and by the nature of the case must always remain, hidden from our knowledge. We cannot measure the power of our intelligence. How could we do so except by means of another intelligence? And if there are two intelligences in us (an absurd thing to say) by what will the power of the second be measured?(1) Or shall we involve

(1) Let it be well noted that the question here is about the powers of the *individual reason*, not about those of *human reason* considered in itself.

ourselves in an infinite series of intelligences (another absurdity), that is to say, in a series which, precisely because infinite, could never give us that last intelligence which would be necessary for judging all the rest? What a delusion, then, for a man to suppose that, if he intrusts himself to the guidance of his reason, he is safe in his own keeping! Does he know, to ask once more, what is the strength of this reason of which he has so high an opinion? Did he measure it before receiving it, before it was assigned to him by nature? Or was he, before coming into existence, called in for consultation, and invited, together with his Creator, to weigh this reason in the balance, thus to make certain that it was of that strength which would be proportionate and suitable to his wants, to the force of the difficulties which he was destined to meet during the life he was afterwards to receive? Moreover, did he then examine all those difficulties one by one, as well as all the temptations to which they would give rise, so that he might be ready to oppose to them that degree of intellectual force which would be sufficient to solve and overcome them all?

Plainly, then, it is by no means necessary, but a

Now the fact that a man's individual reason is unable to measure its own calibre cannot cause any doubt as to the genuineness of those truths which he knows by means of it. For, to say that we can make certain of the truth of what we know is very different from saying that we can tell for certain *what is the extent of our individual capabilities of knowing*. The first of these things we certainly can do—in fact, it is necessary that we should be able to do it; but the second is beyond the power of the individual reason. As to human reason considered in itself, we certainly can fix its limits, and this exactly because, as has just been said, the individual reason can make itself certain of such truths as have come within its knowledge.

matter of pure accident, that a man should be able, by reason alone, to solve at once all the *partial difficulties* which present themselves to him against Divine Providence in the course of his life.

32. I have said "the difficulties which present themselves to him," and not "all the difficulties which could be found in the government of the universe." So unlimited is the extent of this government, that the human mind, far from ever being able to fathom the whole depth of the wisdom which is necessary for administering it, and which is lavishly bestowed upon every part of it, will never even conceive all the questions that could be raised concerning it, all the difficulties that could be proposed. Indeed, it will be, so far as regards man himself, a pure accident, not only that he should know how to untie those knots upon which his thought actually falls; but also that his thought should fall upon such or such knots rather than upon others. And he who already finds it hard to explain some particular event, and is at a loss how to reconcile it with the Divine Wisdom, is so far from having penetrated the depth of those counsels by which all events are directed, that although there are in nature and in the succession of things an infinity of other knots, very much harder to loose than those which he has perceived, he does not even know that they exist.

But if even those difficulties which man does perceive are beyond the power of his reason to solve, what will befall him if he trust to so ignorant a guide in judging the whole plan of God's Providence?

33. He will be tempted to stray from the path of truth. To this temptation a man is not, properly speaking, compelled to yield, but he very often does

yield to it on account of the weakness of his virtue. When a man who is earnestly engaged in searching for the causes of things, finds himself thwarted in the attainment of his object, there naturally arises within him a feeling of discomfort, of mental pain. To rid himself of this disagreeable feeling, wholly peculiar to rational beings, man, unable to discover, as he would wish, the true causes, very easily takes to inventing a great number of imaginary ones. To this eager desire of finding a ready way of accounting for natural phenomena was, in part, due that invention of innumerable divinities presiding over all the operations of nature, an invention that dishonours human reason, which is at once so presumptuous, yet so extremely feeble. Man does not like to remain in a state which constantly reminds him of, and obliges him to confess, his ignorance. He therefore imagines a thousand hypotheses, to persuade himself that he knows a vast deal. Hypotheses resting mostly on mere assertion have abounded in the world in proportion to the scarcity of well-ascertained truths. That which was at first assumed in explanation of the phenomena, and which could at most be credited with some few degrees of probability, was soon taken for a certainty. It is difficult for the generality of men to keep clearly in mind the distinction between probability and certainty; nay, human nature itself, being created for truth, slides as it were by its own weight from the declivity of doubt to the solid plain of settled persuasion. Hence the hypotheses changed into theses and dogmas came to vary, not according to the greater degree of likelihood inherent in them, but according as they seemed more true to those men who were reputed wise. Yet these men themselves differed from

other people, perhaps only in this, that they had found greater difficulties in explaining the natural course of events, and, being unable through ignorance to solve them, had fancied certain fictitious solutions, and taught them with great presumption. Herein lies a prolific source, not only of mythological dreams, but also of fabulous philosophies.

34. To sum up, then: a man who tries to investigate the counsels of Providence by means of his reason alone, abandons himself to mere chance, and does not even know what that is to which he is trusting. Perhaps he will discover some part of those counsels; perhaps this part will be enough to tranquillize him, perhaps it will not; perhaps, again, he will remain totally in the dark. Uncertain is the success of his attempt, because uncertain is the power of the instrument he uses, unknown the force of the difficulty of the enterprise to which he girds himself. Nevertheless, if he happens to gain the knowledge he is in search of, and to see the light he needs for clearing away his darkness, he will be confirmed in his belief in the Deity. In this case, he will probably bless and give thanks to that Deity for having solved his doubts, and manifested Itself to him in creatures. Thus it may come to pass that reason will help him on towards Faith, and arouse in him a desire to hear the more immediate voice of so beneficent a Deity. Perhaps he will second that impulse, and in a heart so well disposed the light revealed by reason will shine more and more brilliantly every day, until at last he is brought to the possession of the entire Divine word, and received into the true Church of God. Holy Scripture seems to refer to such a man when it says:

"A wise man hateth not the commandments and justices, and he shall not be dashed in pieces as a ship in a storm;" and again: "A man of understanding is faithful to the law of God."(1) For this is the same as affirming that the natural judgment itself can bring man near to Faith and to subjection to the Divine Law, provided that sense be true and sufficiently full.

35. Now, what if our inquirer, either because his intelligence is too weak or because the difficulties he stumbles against are too strong, should find himself baffled in the attempt to reconcile human events with his notions of Divine wisdom and goodness? Will he not be in danger of having his Faith in the Deity rudely shaken? Will he not be tempted to throw himself upon some kind of system which, to his short-sighted view, may render it easier to explain events, perhaps even an atheistic system, such as that of Fatalism, or of Atomism, which, by banishing all mind from the world and representing all things as impelled by blind necessity, frees him who is gross-minded enough to embrace it from all further trouble of searching for explanations, and from all that shame which is attached to a confession of ignorance?

36. Here, however, there is one thing to be considered. In the common course of physical as well as of moral events, the wisdom of a provident ruler is so patent that no observer can fail to be forcibly struck by it. It unmistakably shows itself on every side. In the language of Holy Writ, it "cries out on the highways, in the market-places, and on the housetops," inviting all men to itself. Therefore, as regards

(1) Ecclus. xxxiii. 2, 3.

man's power to see that a mind disposes all things in the world, there can be no doubt; for that mind strikes vivid rays of light even into the eyes of those who would fain close them. Consequently, the difficulties which arise against that all-disposing mind can be only partial, can lie only in some particular events which have the appearance of being at variance with that goodness and wisdom according to which the ordinary course of things is seen to proceed. Such being the case, a man will always be inexcusable if, on account of these comparatively very trifling cases of difficulty, he shrinks back from belief in that God Whose existence is so overwhelmingly proclaimed by the testimony of universal nature.

But granted that grounds of objection against that Providence which shines forth in the whole, can be found only by one's thought stopping at some very small part, at some particular event, does it follow that the virtue of an inquirer who has started by placing his whole dependence on his own individual reason will be any the less in danger, or that the success of his investigations will be any the less uncertain? It is true, that when one cannot explain a certain thing, all that this proves in fair logic is one's own ignorance; and it is likewise true, that ignorance is no valid proof of the non-existence of the Supreme Being. But how easily, indeed how often, does a man change the proposition "I do not understand this," into the other, "This does not exist"? especially as, by taking reason for his sole guide, he has already pronounced in its favour, and implicitly declared his undoubting trust in it. And what if to self-love, to which the consciousness of ignorance is so mortifying

and in the end unendurable, we add the allurements of sense? Will not a man be grievously tempted to deny or at least doubt the Divine Goodness when he feels crushed under the load of misfortune, even setting aside the perplexity and the unpleasantness he naturally experiences at seeing the unsatisfactory result of his reasonings? Holy Scripture calls calamities by the name of *temptations*, even when speaking of most holy men; and praises in most glowing terms those who stood faithful to God in the depth of affliction—as, for instance, Job and Tobias—proposing them for imitation as patterns of Faith, and possessors of perfect virtue. What a terrible temptation, then, must this be for those who put all their trust in themselves!

37. Wonderful is the connexion and affinity in man between sense and mind. Given anything unpleasant to the senses, the mind is at once naturally inclined to judge unfavourably of the cause of that pain. And yet it is quite possible that an effect which is unpleasant to the sense may be due to a cause in itself excellent: excellent above all is the First Cause whereby all things are moved and disposed. If the mind could see that Cause with an eye undimmed by the complaints raised by injured sensitivity, it would not be able to help pronouncing it most lovely. But when its attention is drawn to the pain alone, it then forgets to consider the First Cause in Itself, in Its beauty, in Its intrinsic goodness; it considers It only, in Its relation with those unpleasant sensations, I mean only as the cause of them. Regarded in this way, the First Cause has a hideous, repulsive look; and the mind judges of It accordingly. Then the mind, deceived by

this sinister judgment, passes on, first to hate that Cause, next to shun all thought of It, and, finally, to deny It. Here, therefore, we see how it is that the way of reasoning sometimes leads man to difficult encounters, and sometimes even to utter ruin. This happens when natural reason stumbles against difficulties which it is not able to grapple with, while at the same time, man has not enough virtue to acknowledge his ignorance and keep the eye of his mind constantly fixed on it; especially if this occur when he has, furthermore, to battle with sensible sufferings of a peculiarly grievous and harassing nature.

38. Hence, St. Paul tells us of the punishment which God reserved for those philosophers, who, having betaken themselves to the way of reasoning, came to a bad end. They saw, indeed, in all creation, the traces of God's invisible attributes, because God had placed those traces there for the very purpose that men might see them; nevertheless, they held the truth in injustice, they did not confess that truth, nor proclaim it abroad, nor glorify God, nor give Him thanks, but became vain in their thoughts, and their heart was darkened to such a degree that "they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things." (1) Thus did they refuse to recognize that which they beheld everywhere. They disowned that unity of Wisdom which is manifest in all creatures, that unity of Providence which betokens one only Ruler; they dwarfed it, and split it up into a multiplicity of paltry and imperfect forms,

(1) Rom. 1.

inventions of the human mind, and representations of human power or of mere brute strength.

To conclude: the second way in which we have said that human reason can be used in investigating the dispensations of Divine Providence, is fallacious and unsafe,—in one word, its success is purely a matter of accident. It ought, indeed, to lead man to Faith; but, through man's own insufficiency, it not unfrequently leads him astray and hurries him into the gloomy and ruinous paths of unbelief.

CHAPTER X.

REASON MAY BE SAFELY TRUSTED WHEN ASSOCIATED WITH FAITH.

39. Natural reason, then, is short-sighted and liable to error; and yet if man by taking reason for his only guide comes to a bad end, this is never owing to reason itself, but solely to man's own will.

It is man's will that abuses the short-sightedness of reason, its ignorance, its darkness, wielding with most culpable foolishness such miserable weapons against the Supreme Being.

40. Hence, Christianity is the friend of reason—but not, of course, of the abuse which human infirmity or malice makes of it. Hence the pastors of the Church have at all times encouraged men of ability to do their utmost for the purpose of succouring human weakness and ignorance, which are a hindrance to man's receiving fully the teachings of Revelation. Thus, for example, Leo X. in the 8th Session of the 5th Lateran Council, wisely enjoined on the Philosophers of his time (1) to refute by means of arguments furnished simply by the natural light of reason the errors of the Arabian School,

(1) On the friendly and close alliance between Christian Faith and human reason, and of the duty of bearing it practically in mind, see also Pius IX's Dogmatical Constitution *De Fide Catholica*, expressing the mind of the Vatican Council, Chapter IV., *De Fide et Ratione*. It will be found inserted in the volume containing the *Acta et Decreta* of the IV. Provincial Council of Westminster, held in 1874 (pp. 123—5).—*Tr.*

which were then infesting the Church. "For," said he, "since truth can never be opposed to truth, it follows that all their (the Arabians') errors can be refuted even by reason alone." (1)

(1) I beg leave to give an instance of the powerful influence which prejudices imbibed from an early age can exert even on men of high intellectual culture. Dugald Stewart, in a dissertation prefixed to the first volume of the *Supplement to the Encyclopædia Britannica* (4th, 5th, and 6th editions, 1824), says that Melancthon (and consequently Protestantism) discovered that the moral distinction between good and evil is not due to a positive divine revelation, but exists in itself! (p. 30.) He adds that Catholics also have profited by this Protestant discovery. To prove this he quotes a passage from Lampredi's work on *Natural Right and the Law of Nations*. More remarkable still, he does not hesitate to charge the Roman Church with having attempted to divorce Revelation from reason, and to place the two in mutual antagonism; and this he boldly stigmatizes as *the most pernicious heresy of that Church!*

Now, in the first place, I will take it upon myself to affirm, without fear of contradiction, that these few lines (three in all), fallen from Melancthon's pen, very little known, and not taken from the works of this writer himself, but borrowed from Christian Meiners, made no appreciable change in the moral ideas of the time. Secondly: is it not singular that Dugald Stewart did not observe that in the very passage quoted by him from Lampredi reference is made to a place in the writings of Melchior Canus, where this Catholic Divine, not by a few lines, nor by a gratuitous assertion, but at great length and with a full array of solid arguments, refutes Luther, one of whose most mischievous errors consisted precisely in divorcing reason from revelation, and pretending that the moral distinction of good and evil comes to us exclusively from divine revelation? Now, Melchior Canus was Melancthon's contemporary, and died in the same year. How could a man be blind with the truth so clearly before him?

But that this obnoxious doctrine, after being held by Luther, was long maintained among Protestants, we learn from Dugald Stewart himself, who relates that in the year 1598, Daniel Offmann, Professor of Divinity at the University of Helmstadt, taught with Luther that philosophy is a mortal enemy to religion, and that philosophical is so divided from theological truth, that what is true in philosophy may be false in theology. How could he, therefore, after this, so confidently, and without giving the shadow of a proof, ascribe this error to Catholics, and claim for Melancthon the merit of having enlightened the world by those few sentences which were soon forgotten?

41. Now, as reason leads man to the threshold of Faith (34), so it hands him over to Faith as to a more trustworthy guide and a more sublime teacher than itself.

But on the other hand, Faith, in its turn, leads man back again to reason; and then reason, comforted and sustained by Faith, becomes a secure teacher and an infallible guide.

This is, therefore, the third mode of using our intelligence, far better than either of the two we have mentioned. He who follows it is like a man walking along a broad and royal road. He is not lost in that fearful maze of errors which we described when speaking of the first mode (21—27); and he does not wander to and fro with uncertain and perilous steps, along tortuous, insecure and most hazardous paths, as we

No! such an absurdity was never dreamed of by Catholics, and did I not know the incredible force of prejudices I should not hesitate to brand the assertion of the illustrious writer as a gratuitous and unworthy calumny. Catholics have always held in abhorrence this absurdity of the innovators, and the Roman Pontiffs have always condemned it, from Ockam, who was one of its first defenders, down to Pomponazzi, whom Leo X. condemned in this very 5th Lateran Council, that is, before the errors of the Reformation were spread abroad, or Melancthon had enlightened the world, as D. Stewart would have us believe. The same condemnation was afterwards issued against Daniel Offmann.

If Melancthon did not follow Luther in this particular, it only means that, by adhering herein to the Catholic teaching, he fell into one error less. Christianity is a wise religion, and the Roman Pontiffs, who preside over it, have always been, in virtue of their office, the defenders and promulgators of wisdom. They have known that the Chair of Truth could only reign in light. Therefore they have encouraged this wisdom, this light, this truth; they have invoked its aid against error; they have spread it far and wide together with religion, and, along with wisdom and religion, they have diffused true civilization and its attendant blessings. How long, then, will men of an enlightened age show themselves so credulous in believing the most glaring falsehoods?

saw to be the case in the second mode (28—38). He is taken direct to the happy goal for which he is making. Yes truly, intelligence thus used is converted into an open, luminous and straight way. It connects earth with heaven, and even on earth it causes man to enjoy a vivid knowledge of the truth, and complete repose.

42. Thus Faith—by encouraging human reason, by succouring it where it is weak, by rectifying its errors, and by applying a remedy to its most deep-rooted evils —is the one only thing which renders to all men alike the service of giving peace, and which, no matter what the strength of an individual's reason may be, supplies whatever is wanting to make it for him the guide that he requires. The calibre of men's reason varies, the Faith received by believers is the same in all. The power assigned by nature to each individual intelligence is of such fixed quantity as not to admit of substantial increase; hence it does not so adapt itself to the various emergencies and vicissitudes of life as to make itself commensurate with each. The deposit of Faith, on the contrary, is intrusted to man's own free-will, so that he can by study, by good works and by prayer, draw therefrom as much as ever he needs. This treasure is increased by use, and is diminished by negligence, just as man pleases. By trusting to it, man may very well say that he is safe in his own keeping, for he knows in whose hands he places his fortunes, inasmuch as, that treasure being his own, he can dispose of it at discretion, and always have from it what will supply his every necessity, both of mind and heart. Whether or not, therefore, an individual be possessed of great abilities, he equally finds in Revelation and Faith the means of rendering those

abilities sufficient for his requirements. Faith imparts those lights in which weak understandings are deficient; and it unravels that tangled skein of cavilling sophisms in which powerful intellects sometimes find themselves involved as a consequence of the very attempts they make at reasoning. In both cases it offers a suitable food, more solid and substantial in the second case, but not less wholesome nor less agreeable in the first. If a man has abundant leisure for meditation, Faith will lay open before him vast and delightful fields for sublime speculations, whereas, if his occupations leave him but little time to meditate, it will satisfy him by a few but substantial and divine ideas. Such is the comfort which Faith gives to human reason; such the manner in which man can make use of his intelligence with the happiest results.

43. I beg the reader to note well in what I have made to consist the difference between this way of using the intelligence, and the way of Faith alone. If a man, simply by the force of his belief in God and His attributes, sets all doubts against Divine Providence at rest, or again, if simply by a firm reliance on the assurances of Revelation, he reposes tranquilly in God, like a child in its mother's arms, I have said that he follows the way of Faith. But if, besides holding immovably fast to the truth of God's existence and of the revealed dogmas, he further sets himself to investigate many other truths, and to penetrate as far as he can into the marvels of the Divine Counsels, so, however, as at the same time to be fully determined never to lose sight of Faith, but invariably to cleave to it as the guardian of his reason; then, I say, he proceeds by the way of reasoning, still a secure way,

because he is assisted in it by Faith. In this case his reasoning may also be called the offspring of Faith; and this luminous way was that along which the Saints went eagerly forward, searching out the grandest truths. It is the way peculiar to Christians, who do not indeed renounce reason, yet, on the other hand, are not so simple or so vain as to imagine that they are not to listen to any other voice but that of their individual reason, which neither does nor can give proof of its sufficiency for their wants.

44. Now who would not consider that man to be the blind victim of a ridiculous pride, who should refuse to learn anything from others in order to draw all knowledge from himself alone? Deprived of all instruction, nay, deprived of all communication with his fellow men (since even mere inter-communication is a source of instruction), how could any one emerge never so little from that state of complete ignorance in which he was born? If, then, to acquire any degree of mental culture, we are all bound to depend on the assistance of others, is it not strange that persons should be found who reject the aid of revealed truths, the teaching of God Himself?

CHAPTER XI.

BY REVELATION ONLY COULD THE DIVINE PLAN OF THE UNIVERSE BE MADE KNOWN, AND HUMAN DOUBTS AS TO THE PERFECTION OF ITS GOVERNMENT BE DISPELLED.

45. In many places of Holy Writ Faith is described as a life-spring of intelligence, as a power which strengthens human reason and leads it to truth, as a teacher that unfolds before us, and puts us in possession of the secrets of wisdom. St. Paul, writing to the Hebrews, assures them that it is only by Revelation we come to know the stupendous plan which God conceived and is continually carrying into execution in the universe.

All this immense chain of events which we call the universe, beginning with the word that creates, and ending with the word that judges, is, according to the Apostle, dependent upon and held firmly together by God's Eternal Word. "By Faith," he says, "we understand that the world was framed by the Word of God, that from invisible things visible things might be made."(1) Now, what are these invisible things from which the visible things were drawn? They are the concepts of the Omnipotent, which subsisted in His Mind before the creation; they are the decrees conceived by Him from all eternity, but remaining

(1) Hebr. xi. 13.

invisible to creatures, because the latter were not yet formed and the former were not yet executed. These decrees and concepts are the design according to which the All-wise Architect was to raise the mighty edifice, a design, however, which had never been delineated in any outward form, but existed only in His Mind. Accordingly, intellective creatures, before they are admitted to the vision of that Mind, have no means of seeing what the great design of the universe is, until it be externally realized. But it will not be fully accomplished until the end of the ages. Then, and then only, will this design, this immense conception, be rendered perfectly visible; for, according to the teaching of St. Paul, all the ages are comprised in it, all having been from eternity designed and disposed in the secret of the Eternal Mind. Inasmuch, therefore, as the ages, along which the edifice corresponding in its every part to the eternal model is being gradually raised, have not all run their course, and, as a consequence, the structure is not completely visible to man living on this earth, it follows that God alone could by a positive manifestation have made it known to him in its principal parts and in its sublime end. Thus is it that to give us an insight into the Divine conception, a Revelation was necessary. In other words, by Faith alone, which, as the Apostle declares, "cometh by hearing,"(1) was it possible for man to understand, that, in accordance with the decree of the Eternal, the events of all time are directed to the glory of the Word Incarnate as to their one and unspeakably sublime end.

46. For this reason, God, in Isaias, bids His afflicted

(1) Rom. x. 17.

people be of good courage. And to show on what a frail support the heathen nations lean by trusting to their false divinities, He challenges those divinities and all their worshippers to describe the great plan of the universe, a description which can be given by Him alone Who has conceived it, and Who alone carries it into execution.

In fact, in order to render this great plan manifest, to impart such knowledge as alone can tranquillize the human spirit, always restless, always anxious about its future destiny, one must know the present, the past and the future; for, all the immensity of time and all the vastness of space are gathered together and conjoined in the most complete, the most perfect unity; every atom as well as every movement is dependent on a single end, eternally fixed and worthy of God, an end which is God Himself, the Word. "I," says God in the place referred to, "am the first, and I am the last, and besides Me there is no God. Who is like to Me? Let him call and declare, and let him set before Me the order since I appointed the ancient people; and the things to come, and that shall be hereafter, let them show unto them. Fear ye not, neither be ye troubled. From that time I have made thee to hear, and have declared, you are My witnesses."(1) This is as if He had said: As there is no one besides Me who is able to set forth and lay open to men's view the great plan of the universe, embracing as it does all things, the length, the breadth, the depth, the past, the present and the future; so there is no one who is able to find out and to communicate to men what will give them true con-

(1) Isa. xliv. 6–8.

solation in their misfortunes, namely, that knowledge, so needful to them, which accounts for the universal government and justifies it, which solves the difficulties that arise in the minds of those harassed with tribulations, and at the same time allays the agitations of their hearts. Let those, therefore, tremble in the darkness of their ignorance who are far away from Me; but fear not you, My faithful ones; for in the revelations which I will make to you, and which I have always made, there is for you an unfailing source of comfort and of strength. Whatever be the apparent prosperity of the impious, envy it not; for it is uncertain and only momentary.

47. Truly, none but God could have disclosed that moral end of the universe which reduces to rule all apparent irregularities: He alone could at the very beginning tell man, whom He had just created, how all things were drawn out of nothing, how the intelligent creature was the end of all the others, and, lastly, why this creature existed, why it was made, namely, to be happy in serving Him. God alone, by revealing to man the plan which He alone had conceived, could take him into partnership with Himself in the execution of the same.

The revelation of the secrets of Providence, therefore, is what imparts that knowledge which encourages and lifts up the human spirit oppressed by tribulations; and this revelation could come only from God, could emanate only from His Word. It could not have been invented by human reason itself. God presented it to man by drawing it from the secret thought of His Eternal Mind, because, externally, that thought would not be completely realized and manifested save at the

end of time, when all things will be seen to result in a most simple unity. Consequently, without this revelation, by experimental knowledge alone, man harassed with evils and confused by the ever changing round of events, would have found it impossible not to waver in Faith, or even not to lose altogether the idea of a beneficent Mind governing the world. For this reason, God did not leave man without revelation, but began to give it to him from the moment that his woes began—nay, from the moment that he began to exist; and we may safely affirm that it was by such revelation that human reason, originally quite inert, was first set in motion.

48. Indeed, the knowledge of the existence of God, and of His wisdom and goodness in the government of the universe, was that prolific seed, sown at the beginning, out of which afterwards germinated whatever of true, of consoling, of precious, the philosophies of nations have contained.

Hence righteous men, when tossed about and disturbed by reverses, ask of God no other consolation than that He would grant them increased light to see into the secrets of His Providence: "To Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul. Show, O Lord, Thy ways to me, and teach me Thy paths. Instruct me in Thy truth and teach me; for Thou art my Saviour, and on Thee have I waited all day long."(1) Thus did the holy Psalmist seek to find in these ways and paths of the Lord that comfort of which his troubled spirit stood in need, namely, as Eusebius and Theodore of Heraclea expound, in the knowledge of the aims of Providence, of the far-reaching views according to which God dis-

(1) Ps. xxiv. 1, 4, 5.

penses good and evil. It is by communicating these lights, and a corresponding strength, more abundantly in proportion as they are more wanted, that God makes good the promise He has given by His Apostle: "God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it."(1) Hence it comes to pass that, for righteous men, sufferings and calamities are one of those temptations which St. Paul calls by the name of *human*, that is, confined merely to their sensitive part, and nowise affecting, in a sense injurious to true Faith, either their mind or their will.

49. Now this consoling science which God communicates to His Saints is nothing but that body of truths which constitute Revealed Religion. How precious, then, is this Religion to mankind! Is it not true that those who study it well and judge it with equity, find in the end that it is naught else than a science of consolation offered to men in order to comfort and sustain them in their sorrows, to re-animate them in their discouragement, to stay them in the truth and in all virtues? A loving, divine message, therefore, a consolatory treatise is the august volume of the Holy Scriptures, wherein the deposit of our Faith is contained. That such is the general scope and office of the Inspired Writings we are assured by St. Paul, who, addressing himself to the Romans, to encourage them under their tribulations, says: "What things soever were written, were written for our learning, that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope."(2)

(1) 1 Cor. x. 13. (2) Rom. xv. 4.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE PLAN OF THE UNIVERSE THERE IS SOMETHING INFINITE AND MYSTERIOUS. HERE REASON COMES TO A STOP AND INTRUSTS MAN TO FAITH.

50. But if holy men drew the precious science of consolation from the lights received from heaven, they were not by any means so craven-hearted as to expect that those lights would be sent to them without any labour on their part. On the contrary, they were assiduous in pondering on and searching into the Holy Scriptures; and it was only by doing this that the true Israelites found comfort in their calamities. The Royal Prophet, when encompassed by powerful enemies who were plotting his ruin, sang: "The princes sat and spoke against me; but Thy servant was employed in Thy justifications. For Thy testimonies are my meditation, and Thy justifications my counsel;"(1) for that wise and holy king was persuaded that "he should not be confounded, provided he looked into all the Divine commandments."(2)

51. Yet, ponder as we may on the Divine dispositions, search as we may into the inspired Writings, will it ever be possible for us to embrace all the wisdom, to comprehend all the laws, by which God directs and ordains things, inanimate as well as animate? Shall we ever be able to grasp the reasons of all events? In

(1) Ps. cxviii. 23, 24. (2) *Ibid.* 6.

short, can we ever hope to gain such an amount of knowledge as will altogether dispense with the need of Faith?

This were a vain thought. Hence the Scriptures themselves, while on the one hand professing to enlighten us on the counsels of Providence, take care, on the other, to put a check on the impetuosity and boldness of our greed of knowing. They admonish us, that, however far our mind may advance in the discovery of the Divine secrets, it will always come at last to an extreme limit; every attempt to go beyond must necessarily prove a failure.

52. This insuperable boundary is, in the first place, formed by the line which separates the finite from the Absolute—the Infinite; and it marks the limitation of every creature, essentially finite.

Nevertheless, the Divine thoughts which determine the order of the universe, have for object, not merely all that lies within this extreme limit assigned to created intellects, but also all that extends beyond it. Thus the design of Uncreated Wisdom manifests itself to us like a beam of light which is diffused over the whole of creation. Parted into myriad rays, it stretches on far away into the depth of the centuries preordained by God, and in their immeasurable distance grows gradually dimmer and less perceptible to mortal eyes, until at last it is lost to them altogether, and absorbed in, though not confounded with, the infinite ocean of Eternal Light.

53. Here it is very worthy of remark, that for the human mind every thing finite is too little, while the Infinite Absolute is too much; so that man's mind occupies a middle place between two extremes, both

immensely distant from it—that is to say, between an extreme of defect and an extreme of excess; between that which does not satisfy it and that which overpowers it; between that which is infinitely less and that which is infinitely greater than it; between that which, when judging wisely, it spurns as being far beneath its dignity, and that which, as being far too sublime, it is never able fully to reach. In the great thought, therefore, by which God creates and orders the universe, there always remains something invisible and hidden.

Hence the mysteries of Religion, hence the obscurity of Faith; but from this obscurity, where the human mind finds itself lost, man derives the grandest idea and the truest sentiment which it is possible for him to have of the Divinity.

54. Thus Faith, by giving man understanding, does not destroy itself, but becomes itself ever more ennobled, deepened, and refined. It is all the nobler, more profound, and more refined, in proportion as man's reason finds itself more bewildered and lost in the boundless regions of infinity. So long as man, in investigating "the wonderful things of God," has exerted himself only to a partial extent, there may still remain in him that hope which always accompanies a superficial knowledge, the hope of understanding afterwards what he does not understand now. But if he is conscious of having done the very utmost which it is possible for the human mind to do; if he knows that he has gone to the extremest boundaries attainable by him and by his nature; if he touches, as it were, those sacred boundaries, and, in their presence, feels compelled to fall down in adoration as before an altar; then human presumption is entirely brought low, then learned

ignorance begins in him, then, sunk into the depth of his own nothingness, he offers a holier sacrifice to the Infinite Object of his Faith, as to that object which vanquishes not merely his own accidental ignorance, but the very limitations of his nature.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONTINUATION.—IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR MAN TO ARRIVE AT THE PERCEPTION OF GOD IN THE PRESENT LIFE.

55. The reason assigned in the last chapter is not the only one which proves that intelligence and Faith are in mutual harmony, and, far from destroying each other, amicably combine to succour man in his necessity. What I am now about to say will likewise shew how human intelligence, however great its powers, cannot succeed, unless it be aided by Faith, in maintaining man in a state of perfect tranquillity amidst the continual shifting and changing of events.

The intelligence of man is not brought into act except by means of the perceptions of the senses. It is from sensible things,—namely, from the bodies that surround us and act upon us, that our understanding receives the first materials for its conceptions. I here prescind from an extraordinary and immediate communication of God with our souls; and I believe that all the principal philosophical schools agree in the admission that sensations are the causes, or at least the occasions, of the first operations of our mind; and that the differences between these schools are merely as to the manner in which they try to explain

how this fact comes about. I hold, moreover, in accordance with the manifest depositions of experience, that bodies are, in the present life, the only realities different from ourselves, which act upon us *naturally*, and by so doing excite in us sensations and images which attract the attention of our mind. For any reality different from our own to draw the attention of our mind to itself, it must produce such a modification and passion in our own feeling, as may indicate to the mind the presence of a being distinct from ourselves, a term of perception distinct from the percipient.

56. I may be told that our soul is aided in its operations by another external being, namely, by God: and I do not deny that the First Cause intervenes in all the operations of second causes. This, however, does not mean that the First Being, Who assists the intelligent soul in its acts, gives Himself to it as the material of its thoughts. He helps indeed each subject to act, but He does not constitute the *real term* of that subject's actions.

57. External bodies, or rather, the sensations and [sensitive] perceptions which they cause in us, are, therefore, what furnishes to our mind the first materials of its operations. Without these, the mind could not even reflect upon itself. The human intelligence is, by its constitution, simply a power acting through a body, which serves it as the instrument for obtaining the matter on which it acts. Thus our body, which partakes of the life of the soul, occupies, as it were, a middle place between the soul, which is the life itself, and external bodies, which have no life. It forms the means of communication

between these two extremes. Accordingly, it partakes of the nature of both, by conjoining in itself the corporeal and the spiritual substances in an ineffable and recondite union.

58. The whole circle, therefore, within which man's intellective nature, considered by itself, is confined, consists of three things: 1st, An intelligent soul, the *subject;* 2nd, A material world, which is perceived together with man's own [substantial] feeling, and which the intelligence renders an *object* to itself; 3rd, A body which partakes of the nature of the *subject* and of the *real object*, and is the medium of communication between the two. In this body the soul receives the forms which compose the world, and hence can advert to itself, as well as exercise upon those forms and upon itself all those operations of which its activity is capable. This, then, is the whole extent of the development to which the human intelligence can attain. In fact, we may reduce it to two heads: 1st, An original feeling, in which the soul receives from bodies that action which produces in it corporeal forms; 2nd, The exercise, on this feeling and these forms, of the operations peculiar to the intellectual activity, operations which, in ultimate analysis, are reducible to so many acts of abstraction and of synthesis.(1) Now, bearing this in mind, it is easy to see that the forming of a positive conception of God is a task altogether transcending the capability of man: and here is the proof.

(1) What the Author says in this number on the manner in which human cognitions are formed is but a rudimentary hint of his theory on this subject. A full development of that theory will be found in *The Origin of Ideas* (Kegan Paul, Trench and Co., London), *passim*, but especially in the 2nd volume.—*Tr.*

59. The perfections found in material things, as also in man himself, are really distinct, or even separate from one another. Consequently, from the consideration of these things, or of himself, man will indeed be able to draw the abstract ideas of goodness, of wisdom, of justice, of power or other perfections; but he will not be able to conceive all these perfections as subsisting together in perfect unity; he will never know what that most simple perfection is which comprehends, absolutely free from distinction, all perfections and all grades of entity. Beyond all doubt, that which is abstracted from known objects must in some way exist in them. We cannot abstract from a thing what is not in it. Since, then, there is not, in material substances and in limited beings generally, any one thing which contains in itself all partial perfections, much less which is itself all these perfections together, —it plainly follows that man cannot form the conception of such a being, for he finds no example of it, nor even any adequate similitude, in all the objects that are known to him.

60. To make the matter still more clear, I beg the reader to take note of the following simple consideration. The perfections found in created things are mostly accidental to them; so that creatures may or may not have those perfections. For example, intelligent and moral beings may be wise or foolish, good or bad. The conception of the Supreme Being, on the contrary, is of such a nature as absolutely to exclude the possibility of any perfection being wanting in Him; because in Him all perfections belong to His very substance and essence or, to speak more accurately, they are His very Being itself. Of this Being, therefore,

neither an image nor a likeness can be drawn from the observation of the whole of limited nature, because nowhere in this nature is such a characteristic to be met with. Although we can see that He exists, we cannot see *what* He is.(1)

(1) The new philosophical school of Paris, which owes its life and increment to the rare genius of Professor Victor Cousin, by recalling to men's minds the ideas of Plato, has certainly contributed to raise Philosophy from that depth of degradation into which it had fallen in consequence of the materialistic and pedantic spirit introduced by Sensism. While, however, it gives me unfeigned pleasure to make this public acknowledgment to the well-deserving Translator of Plato and of Proclus, I cannot help observing that he has made a mistake in confounding the *Platonic System* with the *Christian System* of truth. These two systems are as different from each other as can be. They are as different as the symbol is from the thing foreshadowed, as the light which shows the objects is from the objects shown by it, as the rays of the sun are from the sun from which they emanate. Plato, deprived of the light of Christianity, was only able to see the reflected rays of the Divinity, and, from an eager desire to fix the gaze of his intellect on the Absolute, mistook those for Him. Guided by the *created light*, he could see that God must exist; but God Himself he did not see. In short, he was able to rise to the contemplation of *abstract* and *common truth;* but this truth is quite another thing from the *First and Subsistent Truth.* It is very easy to confound the First and Subsistent Truth with abstract truth which naturally shines in the human mind, and which St. Thomas has distinguished with admirable precision. It is exactly in this distinction that we must seek for the line of separation between the Christian and the Platonic system. Without it, the confusion of the two is inevitable. The natural light of our own mind, fervently contemplated with that loftiness of view of which great minds are capable, presents characteristics which are altogether divine, and which it derives from its origin, whereof it exhibits the trace and preserves the analogy. In fact, that light is seen to be endowed with an eternal unchangeableness, with a power that cannot be vanquished by any force, even though infinite, with a self-evidence whence all certitude originates. It must be confessed that the imposing grandeur of these characteristics dazzled at first even the earlier Fathers of the Church, and in our own times we have seen men following in the footsteps of the Fathers, and founding a new School of Platonism in the Tyrol; I mean those two most acute thinkers, PP. Ercolano and Filibert. Every body knows, however, of the heresies to which Platonism gave occasion,

The *mode* of being, therefore, of the Divine Nature is totally hidden from our intellectual vision, however much we may try to catch sight of it. It always remains an object of our Faith, separated from us by a thick and impenetrable curtain. Until that curtain be removed by the immediate communication which God will make of Himself to us, we must adore His inaccessible light in profound humiliation and in hope. From creatures there are indeed reflected upon us manifold rays of His glory, because He has, as far as might be, diffused over them His perfections and the vestiges of His wisdom; but in no part of creation is His *Being* openly presented to us. Hence, according to the teaching of St. Paul, the world is merely a kind of mirror and an enigma of the Divinity; and as the world

and which the Catholic Church combated so long, for the very reason that She is quite a different thing from a sect of rational philosophy.

Nevertheless, it is not difficult to perceive that the truth naturally shining in our own minds cannot be the object of Christianity, but only of a Philosophy based on nature. That truth, however great its excellencies, shows itself to us *purely as a rule of the mind*, as an abstraction, never as a *subsistent being;* and where subsistence is wanting, the principal characteristic, nay, the very essence of the Divinity, is wanting. It would be of no avail to reply that the truth which we see can be *proved* to be subsistent; for such a subsistence as this would not be self-evident and inseparable from the truth contemplated by us, but concealed and arrived at by means of reasoning. The subsistence is not, therefore, that light of truth which we see by natural intuition; but is something which, although we cannot see it, we inferentially discover, arguing that it must be conjoined with the said light, in the same way as we prove that in bodies there is, besides the accidents which we see, a substance which we do not see. It remains, then, that God, a simple and subsistent Being, is not known to us by nature, or by any adequate similitude found in created beings, or even in the light of the natural truth. Consequently, we never can, in the present life, know the mode of His Being, although we may, by starting, either from external things, or from abstract truth as interiorly seen by us, arrive with certainty at the knowledge of His existence.

is the only thing visible to us, we can see naught of the Divinity or of Its Being—in Itself most real—save those sparse rays which are reflected to us by this mirror, so obscurely, as to render them an enigma to us.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FOUR LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN REASON ARE RECAPITULATED.—FIRST LIMITATION: REASON CAN FORM NO POSITIVE IDEA OF GOD.

61. It will now be well for us to pause a while and to recapitulate what we have said in the preceding chapters on *the four limitations of human reason*. From them we argued that human intelligence, in order to secure tranquillity amid the trying vicissitudes of this life, requires to be aided by Revelation and Faith; and that Revelation and Reason, far from excluding or contradicting each other, mutually call for each other, and, after leading man on some steps, each amicably refers him to the other.

We have seen that at the beginning, Revelation first set human reason in motion, and then intrusted man to its guidance.

Reason, unmindful of the instructions of its heavenly Teacher, wanders farther and farther astray into a long course of errors, until brought by sad experience to a deep-felt sense of its own insufficiency, and weary of troubles, it again invokes the kindly succour of that Teacher, Who, ever generous and compassionate, receives it back with open arms.

Faith having, happily, come once more to the rescue, infuses a new life and energy into man's reason, sorely harassed as it is, and brought by its own fearful

aberrations to the very verge of ruin, and, without abandoning it, bids it courageously push forward its investigations into the vast fields of truth.

Thus sustained, reason is able to advance with great strides, till it reaches at last those extreme boundaries which have been fixed by nature itself. Seized with a feeling of sacred awe at the sight it stops and reverently pays a willing homage to Faith, which alone can pass beyond them. Moreover, having now grown wise, it again intrusts the human spirit to the powerful guidance of Faith, with the result that this spirit is lifted up high above all creation, and continues so until left finally to repose in the bosom of unspeakable bliss and everlasting Love.

Thus Faith does not limit human intelligence, but helps and strengthens it to the end that man may obtain by his own efforts all the knowledge of which he is capable: and whilst, under its gentle sway, he has entire freedom to enjoy the pleasure of thus instructing himself as far as he can, he may always, on the other hand, rely with certainty on its ready willingness to teach him all that is needful to him, whenever, owing to his unavoidable limitations, he is unable to find it out by himself.

62. The first of the limitations, therefore, to which we have referred, and which affect, not merely this or that particular individual, but the human species itself, nay, all created intelligences, may be thus enunciated:—

CREATED INTELLIGENCES CANNOT FORM A POSITIVE CONCEPT OF GOD, BY MEANS OF WHATEVER KNOWLEDGE THEY MAY HAVE EITHER OF THEMSELVES OR OF OTHER LIMITED BEINGS; BECAUSE IN NO LIMITED BEING CAN THERE BE FOUND WHAT WOULD BE

NECESSARY TO MAKE IT AN ADEQUATE SIMILITUDE OF GOD,—AN EXISTENCE IDENTICAL WITH PERFECTION.

63. Hence we see how true and profound is the description which Holy Scripture gives of the searcher after Wisdom. It tells us that he who considereth her ways in his heart is like unto a lover who looketh in through the crevices of the windows of his beloved, and hearkeneth at her doors. He sets up his tent close to her house, even under the shelter of her roof. Although he is not permitted to enter that house, nevertheless it is supreme bliss to him to be protected under its eaves from the burning rays of the sun and from the fury of the rains. (1)

64. This limitation of the human understanding seems also to be alluded to in the Book of Job, by that question: "Doth not the ear discern words, and the palate of him that eateth, the taste?" (2) As if to remind us that man's judgments are shaped in accordance with the sensations he receives; for it is only from sensations that the operations of the human mind take their start.

65. None of the inspired writers, however, seem to have expressed this doctrine so clearly as we find it expressed by St. Paul in the first epistle to the Corinthians, where he says: "Charity never falleth away, whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed. For, we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a

(1) Ecclus. xiv.—Prov. viii. (2) Job xii. 11.

child. But when I became a man, I put away the things of a child. We see now through a glass *(per speculum*, by means of a mirror) in a dark manner *(in ænigmate*, enigmatically); but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known." (1)

Created things—the only things which we can perceive by the light naturally shining in us—are here called by the Apostle "a mirror of the Divinity." But it is an imperfect mirror, its power being in no way proportionate to the great Object which it has to reflect to our eyes. These things are a mirror of the Divinity merely in so far as they partake of the Divine perfections. Now, although it is true that they partake of those perfections to a greater or less extent according as they are more or less perfect; nevertheless, as theirs is but a finite nature, that participation can never be such as to render them anything like an adequate copy or exemplar of the Infinite Being, Whose very essence and substance consists in *perfection itself subsistent.* Whilst, therefore, they can indicate to us His existence, they must necessarily fall short of showing us *what* He is, that is, of giving us a positive idea of Him. It should be carefully noted that what is wanting of perfection in creatures, is, in God, essential, substantial. Consequently, the difference between participated perfection and Divine perfection is what would constitute the positive idea of God. Since, then, that difference and together with it the essence and substance of God are hidden from us, we must needs be left without a positive idea of Him.

(1) 1. Cor. xiii. 8–12.

Still, in created things we behold the perfections of the Supreme Being dispersed, as it were, and confined within certain limits. These things, therefore, are for us a mirror of the Divinity, but the image they reflect has always the nature of an enigma, of a something wrapped up in obscurity and mystery. We may compare this image to a kind of cipher, having this singular property, that it cannot signify any of the things which we know or can know, but signifies one thing alone, supreme, most perfect, which we do not see, but of which we know that it must exist, because it is the only thing that can explain that cipher which is writ large upon universal nature, shining vividly before our eyes, continually exciting our attention, and calling forth our faith and our adoration.

66. We are thus enabled readily to understand how it was that some philosophers could go so far as to doubt all the truths known by us, being unable to see how we could possibly make ourselves certain that those truths were not mere products of our mind limited by its own laws, and, consequently, mere subjective appearances, of the certainty of whose objects we could have no solid proof. They saw that our ideas about the Divinity must be imperfect; and they attributed this imperfection to our mind itself. It was simply the imperfection of our mind, communicated to the ideas conceived by it. The defect being thus attributed to the organ itself, namely, to the faculty of knowing, the objective truth of every conception of our mind becomes involved in doubt.

67. But these philosophers, and Kant in particular, who carried this kind of speculation farther than any-

one else and drew from it alone, we may say, the whole of his *Critical Philosophy*, did not sufficiently consider the fact which I have just expounded in conformity with the teaching of the Apostle, namely: that the imperfection which is found in our ideas of the Divinity as well as of all other super-sensible beings, is due not to a defect of our mind, or to the mind being, as they assert, limited to a particular form; but to the process which it is compelled to follow, that is to say, to its not having a direct perception of Divine things, but being obliged to form the concept of them by arguing, either from sensible and material objects, or from its own spiritual but limited substance. In consequence of this process, imposed on it by the nature of things, the mind, naturally, cannot attain to a perfect idea of the Supreme Being, or, better, to a *real perception* of Him; because His essence, being according to the sublime expression of Holy Scripture, *incommunicable*, is not shared by creatures, and therefore has in them no adequate likeness; but must be, I might almost say, guessed from the limited effects by which it indicates its presence in them. The truth is, as I shall explain elsewhere, that our mind is so constituted as to receive a full and complete idea of things whenever it can perceive the things themselves; but not so when it is under the necessity of forming its knowledge of them by means of imperfect and altogether inadequate similitudes and relations. (1) "When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be

(1) These two kinds of knowledge are, in the Author's language, called *positive* and *negative* knowledge. For his theory regarding them, see *The Origin of Ideas*, Vol. III, nn. 1234–1241.—*Tr.*

done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away the things of a child." (1) In this case our ideas unavoidably reflect the imperfections of the similitudes of which the mind has had to make use in obtaining its knowledge.

68. For this reason, St. Paul says that when the mind comes to perceive the things themselves, it corrects, by means of adequate conceptions thus acquired, the imperfections of the ideas it had before. Accordingly, when man is brought to the vision of God Himself, he has no need of *Faith*, that is, of believing what he cannot know. Then "prophecies shall be made void, tongues shall cease, and knowledge shall be destroyed"—that knowledge which now "puffeth us up," but will then appear childishness. In this life, he means to say, our knowledge cannot be free from obscurity and mystery; it suffices indeed to make us aware of God's existence; but as regards His essence, it enjoins on us Faith; for, given that a thing is proved to exist, *reason* obliges us also to believe that it is possessed of the mode of existence which is suited to it, although we may not be able to form any concept of that mode. Thus it comes to pass that "we know in part, and we prophesy in part:" in other words, from the cipher with which all things in the universe are marked, we know that there must be the Being signified by it; but we are left to guess, as it were, *what* that Being is. This is what St. Paul expresses by the word *prophesying;* for this is the way in which Prophets are wont to speak. When a Prophet foretells a future event, he shadows it forth with such

(1) 1. Cor. xiii. 10, 11.

characteristic traits as can belong to nothing but that event itself; but inasmuch as he omits to mention a number of other circumstances connected with it, the event continues to remain involved in obscurity until the prophecy comes to be fulfilled. Then it is that everything appears perfectly plain, and we all see that the prophecy could not have applied to any other case than that for which it was intended; as indeed happens with a perfect enigma, which cannot be explained except by the one thing which it is meant at once to signify and to conceal.

69. And here I may observe how the method followed by prophecy agrees in the main with that which the Creator chose in the beginning for the instruction of mankind, and which consisted, as we have seen (9), in so disposing the universe that it should be like a book set before man's eyes, full of enigmas for man himself to decipher. Do we not, even in this constancy in the method of teaching, see a proof of the immutable truth of God's word? and do we not behold, in the character of this method, a proof of the wisdom of Him Who had so formed human reason that it should be exactly fitted for it, surrounding the intelligent soul with a body, and furnishing it with certain organs, so that, by means of the impressions received from sensible things, it might rise to things super-sensible?

70. It is, then, an unquestionable fact that sensible things can only give very imperfect conceptions of the super-sensible. This very imperfection, however, reveals a Divine purpose full of loving-kindness; for by it two objects are obtained, both of them very excellent.

On the part of man, an opportunity is offered for the exercise of Faith, that is, of a rational homage

rendered by the created intelligence to the Deity. Now, intelligence being the noblest portion of creation, this homage is the greatest honour which God could receive from His creatures. On the other hand, the greatest honour which creatures can render to the Creator forms their greatest merit; and this entitles them to the greatest reward. By leaving us, therefore, in the obscurity of Faith, God has conferred on us the greatest benefit He could bestow. Indeed, His loving-kindness manifests itself far more plainly in what He has thus withheld from us, than it would have done in the bestowal of the fullest intelligence. This is the first object.

On the part of God, this limitation of our human knowledge obtains another object equally noble, namely, the reserving to Himself of a wide field for the display of new liberality. Hence He bestows upon us by Grace what we cannot have by nature; and in this way, according to the sublime expression in the Book of Job, "He exceeds our knowledge." (1)

71. We can now see why God commanded the Prophet Ezechiel to propound enigmas to His people (2), as also why the Scriptures, always consistent, foretold of the Saviour that "He would open His mouth in parables" (3), and out of the fulness of His wisdom, "utter things hidden from the foundation of the world." (4)

Thus did the Eternal Goodness find the way to impart knowledge to men without depriving them of the merit of Faith; while at the same time they may still gain the further merit of discovering, through their own industry and perseverance, many of the things that lie

(1) Job xxxvi. 26. (2) Ezech. xvii. 2. (3) Ps. lxxvii. 2. (4) Matt. xiii. 35.

hidden under its veils. Difficult points are no longer a stumbling-block to those who have not the capacity to understand them, or virtue enough to be satisfied with remaining in ignorance regarding them: and the human mind, by being instructed in the same way in which it goes on gradually developing itself, finds the task at once less laborious and more agreeable.

72. After all this, we cannot wonder that in the early stages of humanity wisdom was thought to consist in an interchange between sages of enigmas to be explained, as being the method of learning best suited to human nature and most conformable to the great example given by the First and Supreme Teacher of men. And so, for instance, we read that Solomon was wont to do with the King of Tyre.(1) Again the wise man is described in the Book of Proverbs as "he who understandeth a parable and its interpretation, the words of the wise and their mysterious sayings."(2) And it was of these enigmas—not a few of which are still to be met with in the dealings of Divine Providence regarding the distribution of good and evil—that Job spoke to his friends when he said: "Hear ye my speech, and receive with your ears hidden truths."(3)

73. But what enigmas did he propose to them? The enigma was himself, who, although righteous, lay plunged in sorrow, covered from head to foot with ulcers. Those friends of his could not understand such an enigma, and were therefore scandalized at seeing him in that state. Not knowing how to reconcile such dire sufferings with divine justice, in case he were innocent, instead of suspending their judgment and

(1) Menander and Dius in fragments preserved by Eusebius.
(2) Prov. i. 6. (3) Job xiii. 17.

owning their want of knowledge, they resorted to the expedient of accusing him as a sinner.

74. The obscurity which they found in this enigma, and the difficulty of explaining it otherwise than they did, was greatly increased in consequence of the mysterious language used by Job. He boldly protested his innocence, so much so that "he had a desire to speak to the Almighty Himself, and to reason with Him, for he knew that if he should be judged, he would be found just."—"Call me," he said, confidently turning to God, "and I will answer Thee; or else I will speak, and do Thou answer me. How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me know my crimes and offences. Why hidest Thou Thy face, and thinkest me Thy enemy?" (1)—Neither these words nor the whole of this prophetic and enigmatical story, could have been explained but by one who was acquainted with the key to all the Old Covenant, namely, by JESUS CHRIST, of Whom Job was a figure—the God-Man, Who, although just, was to suffer, and in Whose person alone Job could confidently and with perfect truth speak in the way he did. But JESUS CHRIST, Who accounts indeed for all the rest, remains, Himself, another enigma still more sublime, a divine secret—in a word, an object of Faith. For it is impossible fully to understand Christ without understanding the mystery of the Trinity, on which that of the Incarnation depends, that is, without reaching up to that summit which absolutely transcends all the powers of human intelligence. Hence God's counsel in disposing events can never be fathomed to its last depth by any human insight.

(1) Job xiii.

Thus the plan of the universe has the Divinity Itself for its base, and on this base the edifice is being reared up with a firmness which no power can shake. Well, then, might that friend of Job say: "Behold, God is high in His strength, and none is like Him among the law-givers. Who can search out His ways? or who can say to Him: Thou hast wrought iniquity? Remember that thou knowest not His work concerning which men have sung. All men see Him, every one beholdeth afar off. Behold, God is great, exceeding our knowledge; the number of His years is inestimable."(1)

(1) Job xxxvi. 22–26.

CHAPTER XV.

SECOND LIMITATION OF HUMAN REASON:—IT CANNOT EMBRACE THE INFINITE.

75. Since, then, no created intelligence is able, by the use of its natural powers, to attain to the perception of God—the beginning and the end of the universe—how can any man presume to think himself competent to judge and censure Him in His mode of government? But there is more. Not only is it impossible for us to have the *perception* of God, or to form a *positive concept* of His being, because none of the things that can be perceived by us has in it what is essential to God, namely, the *identification of essence with perfection;* but it is likewise impossible for our mind to comprehend Him, because He is actually and in all respects *infinite.*

76. The second limitation, therefore, which I assign to human reason, is, that it can never arrive at a clear knowledge of that last link which keeps the universe suspended, I might almost say, in eternity, and on which hangs, wrapped up in deepest mystery, the counsel of the Providence that governs it. We may express this limitation thus:—

NO FINITE INTELLIGENCE CAN ATTAIN TO A PERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF THE ABSOLUTE INFINITE.

77. Here it should be noted that something of God's infinity is, in a certain way, communicated to all His works, so that the infinite is met with in all crea-

tion. It mixes itself up with the finite, in space, in time, in ideas, in the modifications of things, which are inconceivable without an identical something which forms their subject. In short, look in whatever direction we may, if our thought seeks at all to advance beyond the surface of things, it soon finds itself lost in regions without bounds, expatiating within a horizon whose extreme border withdraws itself from view and expands into immensity. I ask then: what mind will be able securely to pass judgment on the government of a kingdom like this, of which it does not even embrace the extent, or fully know the nature?

78. It is in connexion with the manner in which Divine Providence dispenses good and evil that the Book of Job makes it a point to remind us of the greatness of God on the one hand, and of our own littleness on the other. There we are told of the *secrets of God's wisdom*, and of how His *law* is *manifold*, that is to say, embraces innumerable relations which He alone can be cognizant of and reveal. "Wilt thou peradventure comprehend the steps of God, and find out the Almighty perfectly? He is higher than heaven, and what wilt thou do? He is deeper than hell, and how wilt thou know? The measure of Him is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. If He shall overturn all things, or shall press them together, who shall contradict Him?" (1) That is to say: The power and the wisdom of God are equal to the immensity of His nature; both they and it exceed the confines of all created natures. However great these may be, however calculated to rouse in our limited mind a sentiment of wonder, a sublime idea, they never can

(1) Job xi. 7–10.

lead us to adequately understand that Being Whose grandeur immeasurably transcends, in a spiritual way, all material bounds. We need not, therefore, be surprised if His wisdom is incomprehensible to us.

Now, this wisdom pervades the whole of the universe; and it is especially profound in the disposal of the destinies of men. Hence the Apostle could not help exclaiming: "How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!" (1)

(1) Rom. xi. 33.

CHAPTER XVI.

THIRD LIMITATION OF HUMAN REASON:—THE INTELLECTUAL CAPABILITIES OF EACH HUMAN INDIVIDUAL HAVE A PURELY ACCIDENTAL MEASURE.

79. Another limitation set by the Creator to human investigations regarding the secrets of His Providence has been already alluded to in Chapter IX.: I mean that accidental limitation which determines each individual's power of knowing. The above-mentioned limitations belong to the very essence of human reason itself—nay, to that of every created intelligence. The one here spoken of, although accidental, is none the less insuperable as regards the individual who has received it. We may formulate it as follows:—

THE POWER OF UNDERSTANDING IS GIVEN BY GOD TO EACH INDIVIDUAL IN A QUANTITY SO DETERMINED, THAT HE WHO POSSESSES IT CANNOT MEASURE IT, THAT IS TO SAY, HE CANNOT ASCERTAIN IN WHAT RELATION HIS OWN FACULTY OF UNDERSTANDING STANDS TO THE DIFFICULTY OF THE QUESTIONS THAT PRESENT THEMSELVES TO HIM FOR SOLUTION.

80. It is therefore absurd, I said, for any one to presume on his power to find for every difficulty its own direct and particular reason: on the contrary, it is both reasonable and necessary that we should

sometimes be doubtful even about those solutions which seem to us to be right.

One thing only it behoves us all constantly to do, namely, to hold for certain that every difficulty regarding the dealings of Divine Providence *has* a solution, although we may not always discover it or discover the true one. It is one thing to be able to prove that a solution must exist, and another thing to be able to define what that solution is. All that we can reasonably demand is that the following thesis should be demonstrated to us: "Every event which seems apparently to clash with Divine Goodness or Divine Wisdom, may, and indeed always must, have an occult reason, which, if it were manifested to us, would dispel all our doubts, and appear to be in perfect harmony with the Divine perfections." More than this we have no right to pretend; we have no right to insist that that reason shall always be indicated to us; it should be enough for us to know that it *does* exist because it *must* exist.

81. Even supposing that some reason were to occur to us which we find satisfactory, what guarantee should we have of its being on that account the true reason? How often does a man feel satisfied with reasons which are valid only in relation to his peculiar way of viewing things? How often is one mind set at rest by a reason which has no such effect upon another? As some persons see a difficulty where others see none at all; so some regard that as a good reason which to others seems a mere futility. I speak of what we witness in our every-day experience, not of the nature of human intelligence itself. I refer to those reasons by which most men seek to satisfy themselves, not to those

which contain a rigorous demonstration, and which only a very few ever think of asking for.

82. True, this imperfection is in itself accidental; nevertheless it is of the essence of human nature that every man should be liable to it. Any man may feel satisfied with reasons which are not those known to God, but which he finds satisfactory simply because they are in keeping with his own short-sighted views.

83. Let us by a mental abstraction take away from human nature all those truths which God has directly revealed. In this case, even supposing its intellectual powers to be perfect and entire, we should still find that, without any fault of its own, it would reason imperfectly on Divine Providence, and justify its ways by reasons weak in themselves, but strong in relation to its own mental state; or else, having caught sight of the difficulties, it would, without offering any special solution to them, set itself at ease by resting in the belief of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness.

84. Hence it seems to me that God intended to humble this nature of ours, so prone to exalt itself with vain conceit, when He directed its attention to the essential defect of which I am speaking by saying to man: "Who is this that wrappeth up sentences in unskilful words? Gird up thy loins like a man: I will ask thee, and answer thou Me. Where wert thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it" (that is, who has fixed the relation of the earth's measure with the other measures of the universe)? "Upon what are its bases grounded? Or who laid the corner stone thereof, when the morning

stars praised Me together, and all the sons of God made a joyful melody? . . . Didst thou since thy birth command the morning, and shew the dawning of the day its place? And didst thou hold the extremities of the earth, shaking them, and hast thou shaken the ungodly out of it? . . . . Hast thou entered into the depths of the sea, and walked in the lowest parts of the deep? Have the gates of death been opened to thee, and hast thou seen the darksome doors? . . . Didst thou know that thou shouldst be born? and didst thou know the number of thy days? . . . Who hath put wisdom in the heart of man? or who gave the cock understanding?" (1) In all this sublime chapter God keeps reminding us of this limitation which makes so evident our utter insignificance as compared with the greatness of His Divine Nature. No, it is not from ourselves that our understanding came. We received it from God, and received it in such measure as He thought proper to bestow. It does not depend on us to make that measure either more or less than it is. We are confined within the limits that have been fixed for us, and we must needs be content with them. (2) It is,

(1) Job xxxviii.

(2) Perhaps it will be asked: If man does not know the relation between his mental capabilities and knowable objects, how is it possible to assign the limitations of human thought? To this I reply, that it is one thing to be able to determine *all* the limits of the mind, and another thing to be able to know *some* of them, those for instance which are assigned to it in this treatise. Again, it might be said: I know that it is impossible for the mind to go further in this particular direction; or: Up to this particular point it is possible for the mind to reach. But it does not follow that the same could be said of all cases generally, that one might define how far the mind could reach in all points. For example, it is possible to demonstrate in general that our mind can perceive the truth, and that it is made precisely for this end; and so likewise it is possible to demonstrate in particular that

therefore, mere presumption for anyone to suppose himself capable of understanding the why and the wherefore of each and every thing that takes place in the universe; and well might God address man in the words which I have quoted, and the purport of which may be thus paraphrased: "If thou, O man, hadst been the author of the world, this work would accord with the notions of thy limited mind from which it originated. But it is not so: the world was, ere thou camest into existence, made by Me, and by Me alone, the Creator. And I Who made this world am the very same Who assigned to thee a certain degree of intelligence, which thou canst indeed use, but not increase by one tittle. I have assigned it to thee just such as I pleased, even as I assigned, within the limits of mere sense, a certain discernment to the animals devoid of reason. The relation, therefore, between the things to be known and the power of thy intelligence, has been fixed by Me, and thou canst make no change in it. Nay, thou canst not form any idea thereof. To know it, thou shouldst know what all the knowable things are; for to understand a given relation between two terms, the terms themselves must be understood. The world does not depend upon thy mind; neither are the ages adapted to thy littleness. There are, in space, regions which thou hast never seen,

a certain object, for instance the Absolute Infinite, can never be comprehended by us. But the same could not be said of numberless other things. Thus, as regards innumerable secrets of nature, it will never be possible to say whether they will be discovered by man, or when they will be discovered. Much less could a similar question be instituted in reference to things, the very existence of which we are ignorant of; hence it is, to say the least, a gratuitous and rash undertaking to maintain, as some writers do, that "man is able to find out *all* the truths belonging to the natural order."—Lastly, in this third limitation I speak of the particular reasoning faculty of each individual, not of the reason of the human species itself.

such as the depths of the abysses, and the heavens; while, in time, there are things, such as all those beyond the threshold of death, which, although they also enter into the great design, are hidden from thee. As, therefore, thou knowest not all the parts of the world, every one of which, nevertheless, is disposed in conformity, not with thy will, but with Mine, so thou knowest not how far the sublimity and beauty of this My design exceeds and transcends thy power of understanding."

Hence it is written: "He hath made all things good in their time, and hath delivered the world to man's consideration, so that man cannot find out the work which God hath made from the beginning to the end." (1)

(1) Ecclesiastes iii. 11.

CHAPTER XVII.

FOURTH LIMITATION OF HUMAN REASON:—IT CAN KNOW ONLY THOSE BEINGS WHICH, INDEPENDENTLY OF ITS OWN ACT, ARE PRESENTED TO IT FOR CONTEMPLATION.

85. To sum up: the first limitation which the human intelligence finds in its action arises *from the process it is obliged to follow* in forming its knowledge of the Author of the universe. It must, for this purpose, ascend from nature to that Being Who is above all nature, and of the simplicity of Whose essence no example is or can be found in natural and finite things. The second and third limitations result from the *relation between the calibre of the intelligence and its objects*, that is to say, the second limitation originates from the relation which this faculty has with the *Infinite Object*, by which it is necessarily overpowered; and the third from the relation it has with those knowable objects which, although *finite*, are *difficult* for it to grasp, so that it is quite uncertain whether it will succeed, or not, in gaining so thorough a knowledge of them as to be able, by means of it, to settle all the doubts, to refute all the sophisms, to solve all the difficulties, which occur to it in connexion with those objects. All these limitations are intrinsic to the intelligence itself, a necessary consequence of the inadequacy of its strength to the task to be performed.

86. There remains the fourth limitation, which belongs to the essence of the knowing *subject*. I have alluded to it in Chapter XI., and it may be expressed as follows:

THE HUMAN INTELLIGENCE CANNOT ACQUIRE ANY KNOWLEDGE UNLESS THE MATERIALS FOR IT BE FURNISHED BY A CAUSE EXTRANEOUS TO ITSELF. (1)

87. The simplest observation of human cognitions is enough to convince us of this fact; and we may safely affirm that philosophical schools generally are

(1) To the four limitations which I have assigned to man's faculty of knowing, I would add a fifth, namely, that arising from the conditions by which this faculty is bound in passing from the state of power to that of action,—in other words, from *the laws which it must follow in all its steps;* laws that flow from the nature of the subject to which it belongs. But as it would take me too long here sufficiently to explain this limitation, I am compelled to omit it. It must not, however, be forgotten that none of the limitations affecting the human intelligence cause any alteration in the formal and ultimate objects of the cognitive acts; hence it always remains an instrument fit for knowing the truth. The efforts which this sublime faculty must make in order to arrive at truth and fully to enjoy its divine aspect; the tortuous paths along which it has sometimes to travel; the overpowering light in which it is at last immerged; all this, I say, is no reason why what it comes to see as a logical necessity should not all be pure and simple truth; and why we should not have, and even necessarily have the power of making ourselves certain that it is so. Whence is it that we know the difference between truth and error? If our intellectual faculties were not made for truth, who could ever have taught us that truth exists? Who could have caused us to doubt whether what we perceive be true or false? Unless our intellectual faculties were made for truth, and perceived truth, we could never feel any uneasiness respecting the truth or falsehood of our conceptions. Scepticism, therefore, the most absolute Pyrrhonism, is a system that could never have been invented but by beings created for truth. It witnesses against itself. It shews both that truth exists and is the natural object of man's intellective faculties, and that these can, of their own nature, arrive at the discovery of ever new truths; for every power is proportionate to its own object, and if it is not accidentally disordered, and is rightly used, naturally and infallibly attains to that object.

agreed upon it, although they differ in their mode of explaining it, each school trying to give such an explanation as may be made to tally with its own system. In truth, if by the word "know" we mean, according to the usual way of speaking, "actually to apprehend something with the mind," or "to retain the memory of what has been apprehended," then every act of knowledge implies an object, and it implies that this object is, no matter from what source, presented (1) to our mind. Hence it follows, that as the acts of the mind are distinct from the mind itself, these acts presuppose the existence of the mind; since no power acts before existing. Consequently, for the human mind, the knowledge of things is accidental, so the mind could exist without that knowledge. Hence the twofold defect, of *ignorance* and *liability to error*. It is not, however, my purpose here to analyze the limitations and defects to which our intellective *acts* are subject, but only to enumerate the limitations of human intelligence itself.

(1) Referring to this subject in the *Origin of Ideas*, n. 515, the Author says: "In order that we may perceive a thing, it is necessary that that thing should be presented to our perceptive faculty. Unless, therefore, some term were presented for the act of this faculty, we could neither have a sensation nor a thought; our spirit would remain in that inert state which I have just described, and which constitutes one of the essential limitations of the human understanding. Hence it follows that the action of our spirit is limited by its term. If, therefore, the term is what draws forth our intelligent spirit into its proper act, wherein its action rests, we must needs concede that the presence of the term accounts only for that special activity which has reference to and terminates in it. Consequently, the term cannot explain any activity different in nature, or higher in degree, than that which ends in the term itself."—*Tr.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONTINUATION—OUR COGNITIVE ACTS ARE ACCIDENTAL TO THE MIND.—THE MATERIAL OF OUR COGNITIONS IS LIMITED, AND FURNISHED TO EACH INDIVIDUAL BY THE CREATOR.

88. The fourth limitation of which we are now speaking will perhaps be better understood, if we divide it into two parts according to the two aspects in which it can be considered. The first part may be expressed as follows:—

THE ACTS WHEREBY THE HUMAN MIND KNOWS SUBSISTENT BEINGS ARE NOT ESSENTIAL TO IT, BUT AROUSED IN IT BY THE ACTION OF THOSE BEINGS. HENCE THE MIND CANNOT FIX ITS ATTENTION ON ANY ABSTRACT IDEA SPONTANEOUSLY, BUT MUST BE MOVED THERETO BY SOME SENSIBLE SIGN, WHICH, BEING ATTACHED TO THAT IDEA, CAUSES THE IDEA ITSELF TO APPEAR AS IF IT WERE A SUBSISTENT THING.

89. This at once reminds us of the *tabula rasa* to which Aristotle compares the state in which the human mind at first exists. Indeed, it may without any impropriety be said, that our mind, as we receive it from God, is like a clean tablet, or an unwritten page. Some being DIFFERENT FROM OURSELVES must come and with a learned hand, so to speak, gradually write on this tablet or page the teachings of wisdom.

90. Were we left to ourselves alone, I mean to the internal forces which constitute our nature, were we not brought into contact with, or affected by, any of the forces outside, our mind could never stir or make the least act of any kind; it could never form a single thought, although the Omnipotent should preserve us in this state of isolation from other subsistent beings for thousands of years. All would remain perfectly quiescent in us, and necessarily so; for there would be nothing to set our mind in motion, no term for it to divert its attention to. Ours would be an inert life resembling non-existence,(1) a state which indeed affords matter for deep philosophical meditation, and furnishes a key to the most marvellous secrets of the study of man. Without something, therefore, which is different from ourselves, without an action exerted by other beings upon our sense, we could never attain to any particular cognition. This our original immobility is a fact which the thinker discovers by observation. Without a stimulus, man's activity, however great we may suppose it to be, cannot pass into action, although when action has begun, that activity can preserve, direct, and increase it.

(1) In like manner, even the body, alive but absolutely motionless, and not impressed in any way by surrounding objects, would, for practical purposes, be as if it had no life. Again, our eye, gazing immovably at the pure light diffused through space but never descrying any particular object whatever in that light, would, for life's purposes, be no better than no eye at all. The same may be said of our mind, which is the eye of the soul. So long as this eye contemplates nothing but the original *light* by the intuition of which it is constituted a mind, an *intellect;* so long as no particular or determinate objects (entities of any kind, real or ideal) present themselves to its vision in that *light*, it has none of what is usually called knowledge; and so this kind of existence would, practically speaking, resemble non-existence.—*Tr.*

91. But what are external and material beings? Who brings them into contact with our sensitive organs? Why are we impressed by some rather than by others? Does the circumstance of these brute beings presenting themselves to us and striking our senses depend on themselves? If we at our coming into the world, and afterwards in succession, are surrounded and acted upon by these rather than by those, is this perhaps due to a free act of theirs by which they choose either to approach us or to shun us? No one can think so. Therefore, the sufficient reason why our senses are affected by such beings, and by some rather than by others, at one time and in one mode rather than at another time and in another mode, must be sought outside those beings themselves, in an intelligent and free principle which is superior to them, and disposes of them, and guides and uses them at pleasure as instruments for our intellectual development.

At first, then, our minds are the clean tablet or the "virgin page" whereon the cognitions will have to be written—written, I repeat, not by ourselves, but by something external to us, by some force, some being, which, be it what it may, is indubitably superior to material beings.

92. But if so, what ought we to think of that infatuation which is called pride of learning? Is it not as ridiculous as it would be for a written volume to take pride in itself because it happened to have been penned by a skilful hand? Whatever knowledge we acquire, we must be indebted for it to a being other than ourselves, a being who can both apply the stimuli to our mind, and furnish the objects that we

are to know. These objects, although co-existent with us, are independent of us, and subject to the good pleasure of Him Who made us, and, together with us, made the universe, that it might form the subject-matter of our cognitions and be the motor of our intellectual activity. Even in this sense, therefore, it is perfectly true to say that all men are merely disciples, and that they have but one Master, Him Who is the Almighty Lord of all things. Seeing, therefore, that man has, of his own nature, this general limitation—that he can know nothing unless the elements of his cognitions be presented to him, it clearly follows that all his learning is reduced to what it has pleased this Sovereign Lord to teach him. Consequently, how absurd it is for any one to abuse knowledge by turning it against his Divine Tutor and Instructor, whereas he knows not a tittle beyond what that Divine Teacher allows him to know, what He Himself, within determinate and impassable limits, imparts to him.

93. To conclude: Man receives his knowledge from without; and this fact alone imports a humiliation, a dependence, which, whether he will or not, subjects him to the Omnipotent, and obliges him to give glory to God not only by that knowledge by the abuse of which he dishonours his Maker, but even by his very existence.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONTINUATION—THREE OBJECTS OF COGNITION GRANTED TO MAN IN A CERTAIN MEASURE DETERMINED BY GOD'S OWN FREE WILL.

94. If instead of considering this dependence, this limitation of man in itself, we consider it in its consequences, namely, in the knowledge which it is possible for man thus circumstanced to acquire, we shall have the second of the two parts into which we said the fourth limitation of human reason may be divided. It will be this:—

THE KNOWLEDGE ATTAINABLE BY MAN IS LIMITED TO WHAT GOD PLEASES TO MANIFEST TO HIM NATURALLY OR SUPERNATURALLY.

95. Now, what God has thought fit, speaking generally, to manifest to man—in other words, the objects which He has placed before man for cognition, may be classified under three heads.

96. *First:* He placed before him this universe, that is, man himself and all the natural objects that surround him and act upon his sensitive organs. This might be called a natural revelation. To lay hold of it, the use of the human faculties is required; and so it seems as if man himself were the author of his cognitions. But upon closer examination we find that, inasmuch as the objects of those cognitions are presented to man's faculties by God, it is to God that the title of teacher

properly belongs; in the same way that this title is rightly given to a pedagogue who instructs a class of young pupils by placing before their eyes a series of well drawn and skilfully arranged representations of different objects.

97. *Secondly:* God gave also a supernatural Revelation, a Revelation, namely, made not to the senses by means of created things, but to the understanding by means of hearing—a Revelation of sublime truths relating to our end and to the means of obtaining it, or, more in general, of truths which make known to us the designs of the Creator regarding ourselves, and invite us to correspond thereto.

98. Now, in both these kinds of Revelation, these two classes of objects proposed to the human understanding, the Divine Wisdom ordained that there should be some things that are *obscure* and impenetrable, others that are *difficult* and that can be known only by long application, and others, finally, that are *clear* and luminous. That is to say, it pleased God to reveal to man such and so many clear things, and so much of light also in the obscure ones, as would suffice to enable him to obtain the sublime end for which he was destined; leaving at the same time so much of obscurity and impenetrability as would suffice, through the experience of that mysterious darkness, to persuade man of his own littleness as confronted with the Divine Greatness, and such kind and degree of difficulty, and therefore of study and time required for overcoming it, as was fitting in order that different individuals might have the opportunity of procuring different intellectual food—different, yet always sufficient, for their need—and that no one

might be denied the chance of gaining the merit which can be obtained by application and diligence in the study of Divine things.

99. *Thirdly:* In the last place, it was necessary that man should be supplied with a means for passing from the most material perceptions to the highest intellectual abstractions; and this means could be no other than language. Man would thus at the same time be enabled to ascend from the first object of Revelation to the second, from the natural Revelation to the supernatural. For, as the external Revelation of supernatural truths is communicated through hearing, it requires language as its instrument. Moreover, this Revelation presupposes many abstract ideas as already conceived by the mind. Now, man could not give language to himself; consequently, it is to the Creator that he owes also this means of knowing. In consequence of the limitation above mentioned (85-87), the human mind could not be brought into action except by the perception either of subsistent beings or of sensible signs.

CHAPTER XX.

CONTINUATION—DIVINE ORIGIN OF A PART OF LANGUAGE.

100. Without sensible signs, man could not even conceive abstract ideas. (1) In fact, what are abstract ideas? They are simply qualities of beings contemplated by the mind in their ideality, and apart by themselves; they are mental conceptions. Now, where are the objects of such ideas to be found? Nowhere but in the mind itself.

101. Let us, for example, take the abstract idea of whiteness. I see a great number of white bodies, but in none of them do I see whiteness standing by itself alone. The abstract idea of whiteness gives me whiteness pure and simple, whiteness without either admixture or gradation. If I add anything to it, it is no longer abstract—that is, separated from every other concept, as well as from every connexion and every substance. Now, in this isolated state, I cannot have it anywhere but in my own mind. Outside, I perceive it only as united with bodies and as existing together with the weight, flavour, shape and other qualities belonging to them. Whiteness, therefore, in so far as it is abstract, exists only in the thought—it is a purely mental being. It has, indeed, so long as it is found united with other things, its foundation in the

(1) See note to no. 102.

external world; but in its abstract state, as standing by itself separate from everything else, it has no existence there. Nevertheless, can this abstract whiteness which, as such, exists in the mind alone, be confounded with the mind itself? Not by any means. The mind perceives abstract whiteness as a thing distinct from itself; as distinct as all those other objects which it perceives as really subsisting in the outer world. (1) Now, how is this mode of conceiving possible? I answer:—

102. By means of an external sign, a sign which by holding the place of whiteness apprehended by the mind, gives it an existence also outside the mind; a sensible sign of the idea which is not sensible; in short, a word directed to single out the whiteness from among the other objects that surround it so long as it is perceived along with the bodies in which it really exists. Thus singled out apart from all

(1) *Objectivity* is the first of the characteristics essential to ideas. In order to see that ideas cannot be confounded with the mind which apprehends them, it is enough to consider that between them and the mind there is actual *opposition*. The mind is the eye that sees, ideas are the things seen by this eye. The mind is a singular, an idea is a universal. The mind has commenced in time, the contents of ideas, *i.e.*, the essences of things, are eternal. The mind is subject to change, the contents of ideas are unchangeable. The mind is a contingent thing, the contents of ideas are necessary things. This simple observation ought to be quite sufficient to shew the absurdity of that theory which affirms that the light of *reason*, or, in Aristotelian phrase, *the light of the acting intellect*, is the thinking faculty itself, or a part of it. For, all that this faculty sees in ideas is the very thing seen in that light ("being in general," *ens commune*), seen, that is to say, with various determinations, or under various aspects. If therefore these ideas, which are all *acquired*, cannot be confounded with the mind, or be considered as parts of it for the reasons stated, *a fortiori* must this be the case as regards that which is the foundation of every one of them, and from which all their sublime characteristics are derived.—*Tr.*

other entities, accidental or substantial, the whiteness stands up distinct and alone before the mind, which, having its attention called to it by the word which expresses it, sees it as it were suspended in that word, and hence sees it just as if it were a subsistent thing.

From this it is plain that external signs were necessary to man in order that his mind might associate and bind up abstractions with them. But he could not invent those signs by himself, for the reason that to invent, he must already have been possessed of abstractions, which, nevertheless, he could not acquire save by means of words. (1) God, therefore, imparted to him a

(1) *By means of words.* In a note to no. 522 of the Essay on the *Origin of Ideas*, the Author writes, "In the first place, it would be impossible for language to be invented by any man who is completely cut off from society, because in that state no occasion or possibility would exist of an intercommunication of wants and thoughts. But supposing a human individual placed in the midst of other men who are devoid of language, two questions may then arise. The first is: 'Whether these men could invent a language before having formed some abstract ideas, or form these abstract ideas before having invented some sort of language or some signs;' and to this question I answer, No. The second: 'Could they do these two things *simultaneously*, *i.e.*, could they invent words or signs with the same act by which they form abstract ideas?' And this I think would not be impossible." And he refers the reader to the *Psychology* (1456-1473), where this point is reasoned out at length, and where (1471) the following words occur: "I have elsewhere" [he refers to this very passage] "expressed the opinion that human beings could not by themselves conceive and name purely abstract ideas, for the reason that there is not in nature any stimulus capable of moving them thereto; whence I deduced the divine origin of this part of language. But after more mature reflection the said demonstration does not seem to me incontrovertible. I therefore distinguish between the question of *fact* and that of *simple possibility*. As a matter of fact, it is certain that the first man did learn speech by God Himself speaking to him first; and the arguments which prove this will be given elsewhere. But if we speak of a mere metaphysical possibility, that is, if we ask whether the human family (not isolated man) could in process of time have succeeded in forming by one and the same complex act, at least some abstract ideas and words or

language; that Supreme Instructor taught him the use of some words, in which the abstractions, contemplated together with them, might, so to speak, appear outwardly subsistent. These words could attract to themselves the attention of the mind, and determine it to fix itself on special qualities apart from the objects in which they exist. All this in accordance with the general law, that the human mind must primarily be moved to act by the impressions made on the sense by external objects.

other signs expressing them, I think I can now affirm that I have discovered (*i.e.*, in nature) that stimulus which suffices to move the human understanding to such an act, and which I had formerly sought for in vain."—*Tr.*

CHAPTER XXI.

CONTINUATION:—MAN OWES TO GOD, TOGETHER WITH LANGUAGE, THE KNOWLEDGE OF SOME PRINCIPAL TRUTHS WHICH HAVE BEEN PRESERVED IN THE TRADITIONS OF THE HUMAN RACE.

103. With respect to the first of the three above-mentioned objects, I mean the universe, it is St. Paul who reminds us that whatever we come to learn through the consideration thereof, ought to be regarded as the teaching of God Himself.

104. In the passage to which I have before adverted (38), we have seen that the Apostle condemns the heathen philosophers because "having known God, they did not glorify Him as God, or give thanks, but became vain in their thoughts," as if the truths contained in that knowledge had been invented wholly and solely by themselves; whereas "that which is known of God (1) was manifested unto them" by God, Who diffused the rays of His Power and Divinity over all creation purposely for the end that, by seeing these, they might see also His invisible attributes. (2)

105. But how did the human mind first ascend from creatures to the Creator? How was it drawn into its

(1) *That which is known of God* (*quod notum est Dei*), that is to say, known and knowable by man.

(2) Rom. 1.

initial movement toward that lofty flight? Can the mind of itself begin to act spontaneously? Has it an activity, an agility, so independent of all external impulses, and of all associations of ideas? Or rather, is it not drawn in the first instance, as we have already said, from external objects to thoughts, and then, through the mutual association of these, gradually enabled to acquire dominion over itself, and mobility, and the power of passing spontaneously from one of them to the other? What do the Holy Scriptures tell us about this matter? In short, how did man after being brought into existence begin his intellectual course? How did he rise from sensations to abstract ideas, and thus gain the ability to form judgments on things—judgments, without which, he, as an intelligent being, would have found the said things of little or no use, almost unintelligible, and containing in vain the vestiges of the Divinity, because he could not see these vestiges apart by themselves, and therefore could not make use of them as stepping-stones, so to speak, for ascending with his mind to the Creator?

106. We learn from the Inspired Volume that God was the first to name the principal parts of creation, applying a special name to each, so that it might be fully knowable by man. By creating it, He had rendered it perceptible; by naming it, He rendered it knowable as the type of a species intended to serve as a light to the mind.

107. In this way language, as originally instituted by God, was ordained for two purposes, and appointed as a means of communication between the two great orders of things—the visible and the invisible. Indeed, the first purpose of language was, as we have just

said, to render the sensible universe fully knowable; the second was to enable man to pass beyond the confines of the sensible universe. Once beyond those confines, man would be capable of taking higher flights and of attaining to the knowledge of greater things, things not falling under his senses, yet of supreme importance to him, inasmuch as in them all his future destinies centred, and his complete felicity must ultimately consist.

108. This naturally leads us to suppose that language would not be taught by the Supreme Instructor merely for its own sake, as the direct scope of the teaching; but only indirectly, as a vesture of, and an accessory to, those great truths which revealed to man the end of his existence, and the loving care which Divine Wisdom took of him. Therefore, as I believe, the eternal truths were incorporated in language and conveyed together with it. Certainly, God did not teach language to man in the same way as a master teaches grammar to his class, but rather as parents are wont to do with their children, to whom, simultaneously with language, they teach the things contained in it.

109. Hence each Divine word must have been a great instruction for our first parents ere they had the use of speech. Nor need we wonder that they readily understood what was said to them, and as readily could themselves begin to speak, in imitation of their Teacher; for their power of understanding may well be supposed to have been very great. In any case, they did not receive the intellective faculty in that feeble and unreliable condition in which we now see it in newly born infants, but they received it in a

state befitting the adult age in which they were first created.

110. This is why the Sacred Scriptures attribute to the Holy Spirit the gift of speech. "The Spirit of the Lord" (we read in the Book of Wisdom) "hath filled the whole world; and that which containeth all things hath knowledge of the voice." (1) This passage is very suggestive. That we might notice the connexion language has with the most sublime truths, to signify which it was originally ordained, the inspired writer is not content with saying that the Spirit of the Lord has the knowledge of speech, but he adds that this same Spirit fills with Himself the whole world and contains in Himself all things. See how he conjoins the knowledge of speech with the knowledge of all things, or rather, the knowledge of all things with the knowledge of speech. He puts down this second knowledge as antecedent to the first. Only that Divine Spirit Who fills the earth and all things knows how to speak. The passage seems, therefore, intended to give us to understand that the invention of speech, requiring as it did a universal wisdom in the inventor, was a task altogether beyond human power.

In truth, to make use of speech after it has been learnt from others is a very different thing from inventing it outright. The inventor of human speech would not perhaps have encountered an insuperable difficulty in the naming of sensible and subsistent things; but how could he have bethought himself of finding names for abstract ideas, which did not fall under his perception either in themselves or in any

(1) Wisd. i. 7.

sign that would direct his attention to them? Failing this perception, one does not see how he could possibly have observed the qualities of things as distinct and separate from the subjects in which they exist, or by what means his attention could have been drawn to these abstract qualities. Now, without abstract ideas, how was he to attain to the highest conceptions, which either are contained in the great abstracts, or else can be known only by means of abstractions?

111. And since, as a matter of fact, the lesser abstractions are included in the greater, who could have indicated to man the way of passing from the one class to the other? of descending, that is to say, from the more general to the less, which is the first and obscure process of the human mind, (1) and then re-ascending from the latter to the former, which is the second and luminous process? It was necessary that man should at first receive, by means of words, the highest truths and the most general abstractions; because it is from these that the human mind invariably starts on its course of development—a course which is, in great part, hidden from, and therefore unperceived by, the mind itself. Such indeed must have been

(1) This is also the teaching of St. Thomas of Aquin: *Prius occurrit intellectui nostro cognoscere animal quam cognoscere hominem. Et eadem ratio est si comparemus* QUODCUMQUE MAGIS UNIVERSALE *ad* MINUS UNIVERSALE (S. p. i., q. lxxxv., art. iii). In conformity with this doctrine he writes: *Illud quod* PRIMO *cadit sub apprehensione est ens, cujus intellectus includitur in omnibus quæcumque quis apprehendit* (S. p. i., ii., q. xliv., art 2.); which is the same as to say that without apprehending (*i.e.*, having the idea of) being, man can have no other idea, cannot think, and therefore, that this idea cannot be acquired through any act of the mind, but must be in the mind from the first, as light to illumine everything else. The idea of being, in a word, must be innate, and mind is mind only by virtue of it.—*Tr.*

the purport of the names by which God originally designated the various parts of the universe, these parts being themselves taken as signs of so many fundamental abstractions, as I may perhaps have occasion to show in another place. Now in order to place language upon so deep a foundation of wisdom, the inventor must certainly be cognizant of the plan of the universe, must contain in himself all things, know all their relations, and the one great end to which they are all ordained; in short, he must be possessed of wisdom, which, as Leibnitz has well said, "according to the commonly received idea of it, means nothing else than *the Science of Happiness*." (1)

112. In many places of Holy Writ it is insinuated that no merely partial knowledge is enough to constitute wisdom; that wisdom must be the result of universal knowledge; and that, therefore, man is unable to discover it by himself, but must receive it as a gift from the Omniscient. (2) What is said of wisdom, seems to me equally applicable to the foundations of human language; so great is the affinity and connexion between these two things! They were given conjointly in the same manner, I should almost say, as the accidents of matter were created conjointly with matter itself.

113. It would appear that from this doctrine the Writer of the Book of Wisdom draws an argument against those who, either openly or even only in thought, murmur against the dispositions of Providence. The meaning of the passage to which I refer

(1) *Pref. Cod. Jur. Gent. Diplom.*

(2) See the Author's *Essay on the Unity of Education* ("Sull' Unità dell' Educazione"), where the passages from Holy Scripture are given.

(Ch. 1. 5-14), put into a plain English form, might be thus expressed: "You that have the temerity to condemn or criticize the decrees of Providence, beware! The language which you employ in so doing, remember well, was given by none else than the Spirit of that very God Whom you dare to repine against; and He will certainly bring you to account for the use you make of His gift. Nor can you hide yourselves from Him; for He is the same Spirit Who, filling all things with Himself, knows them all, and therefore knows the meaning of every word you say, whether outwardly or secretly in your heart. When He taught speech to our first parents, He bound it up inseparably with the eternal truths; to speak, therefore, in accordance with the intention of language, you must love those truths and keep them always in view. By speaking in a way derogatory to them you contradict yourselves; for words have a sense independent of you and confirmatory of the very things which you gainsay. You stand, therefore, self-condemned in the presence of Him Who is perfectly aware of your contradictions. In his very thoughts, the blasphemer shall feel God rebuking him for his impiety. Refrain, therefore, from murmuring; for it will only have the effect of killing your own souls. Believe in God. He has not made death, neither does He delight in the perdition of men. He has made a design whose grandeur infinitely transcends all your powers of comprehension, and He will fully accomplish it in due time, although in a way which you cannot even imagine."—Hence it comes to pass, that in the same way that language is communicated from father to son, also (this writer says) wisdom "conveyeth

herself through generations, and maketh friends of God and Prophets." (1)

114. In the earliest ages it was strongly recommended to the heads of families that they should carefully instruct their offspring in the Divine Law, and transmit to them the Divine Revelations as well as the histories which connected our race with the Creator. It is by these traditions that the traces of the same primary truths, though much altered and counterfeited, were preserved throughout all ages and among all nations, as upon a diligent examination we can see even at this day. But against the negligence and unfaithfulness of those ancient men in fulfilling their obligation, a remedy was, in great part, supplied by the nature of language. For although language, in coming down through a long series of generations, became altered and corrupted in the same measure as the truths of which I speak, nevertheless it would neither be entirely destroyed, nor, so long as it continued to exist, be divided from those elements which form both the roots of all human cognitions, and the subject and, as it were, the *substratum* of the first and radical words. Hence the parents, by the mere fact of communicating language to their children were, even unawares, handing down the greatest truths, which were securely encased, so to speak, and consigned in the material form of words. This is why languages, notwithstanding the many corruptions, changes, divisions, and additions they have undergone, still seem, in the eyes of competent and impartial critics, to bear in their first elements the im-

(1) Wisd. vii. 27.

press of a common origin, as well as of the vestiges of the same principal truths.

115. In conclusion, then; whatever things man knows he knows because God communicates them to him. And these objects thus communicated consist either of the subsistent things that compose this visible universe, or of words signifying ideas abstracted from these things, or, again, of words conveying truths of a supernatural order—truths which He has revealed by, and closely united with, the words themselves.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS CANNOT BE OBTAINED FROM OUR NATURAL REASON: IT IS LEARNT FROM GOD.

116. It was by the consideration of this truth that Job found comfort in the depth of his sorrows. For, passing in review the more marvellous parts of the universe, he everywhere met with difficulties which no human thought could solve; and yet he at the same time understood that even if he should succeed in fathoming all the mysteries of nature, he could not on that account believe himself possessed of wisdom, inasmuch as wisdom did not lie within the confines of creation, but had its seat in the bosom of the Eternal. "Where" (asked the holy man) "is wisdom to be found? And where is the place of understanding?" And he replied to himself: "Man knoweth not the price thereof, nor is it found in the land of them that live in delights" (it does not consist in sensible goods and pleasures). "The finest gold shall not purchase it, neither shall silver be weighed in exchange for it. It shall not be compared with the dyed colours of India, or with the most precious stone sardonyx, or the sapphire. Gold or crystal cannot equal it, neither shall any vessels of gold be changed for it" (from none of those goods which man naturally experiences, and from which he forms his estimates of things can

wisdom be derived). Then he adds: "Wisdom is drawn out of secret places" (places impenetrable to human vision). But what places are these? He goes on: "It is hid from the eyes of all living, and the fowls of the air know it not" (it is not contained within the regions of space). "Destruction and death have said: With our ears we have heard the fame thereof."—Who, then, knows it? Here at last comes the true answer: "God understandeth the way of it, and He knoweth the place thereof. For He beholdeth the ends of the world, and looketh on all things that are under the heaven. Who made a weight for the winds, and weighed the waters by measure? When He gave a law for the rain, and a way for the sounding storms; then He saw it, and declared, and prepared, and searched it. And He said to man: Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding." (1)

117. In this sublime passage we are informed that Wisdom cannot dwell in any part of creation, that is, either in the heavens, or on the earth, or in the sea, or in the abyss beneath; but that it dwells only in that Mind which by a single act contemplates all the diverse parts of creation, compares them together, and gathers them into unity—a thing impossible to the human mind, to which the whole of creation is never present either simultaneously or in succession. Wisdom, as we have said, is the science of happiness. Now man's natural knowledge, as Job reminds us, is purely experimental, viz., obtained by means of the senses. According to this experience, man knows only external goods, riches, and the pleasures of life; but in none

(1) Job xxviii. 12–28.

of these things can happiness, and therefore wisdom, be found: "High and eminent things shall not be mentioned in comparison with it; and wisdom is drawn from secret places." (1) But will man, abandoned to himself, find it after death? No; deprived of communion with God, he will have merely a negative knowledge of it; in other words, he will then know that during his life-time he wandered astray from it; and thus his idea of wisdom will be no better than one of those vague notions which we form of things that are far out of our reach, and which we know only by hearsay: "Destruction and death have said: With our ears we have heard the fame thereof." (2)

118. Supposing, however, for argument's sake, that happiness could be found in some earthly good, and supposing, moreover, that man had actually obtained possession of that good, I ask: could he, even in that case, be independent of God, and securely rely on his own knowledge and his own power alone?—Not in the least; for, where is the guarantee that the precious treasure will not be wrested from him? Does he know all the power of the natural forces by which he is surrounded? In the continuous, irresistible course of the mutual interaction of these forces—so utterly beyond his control—is it not a fact that he may at any moment fall a victim and be crushed out of existence? crushed like one of those insects on the road which perish in myriads under the foot of the casual wayfarer? Ignorant and weak mortal! who so flippantly discuss the order established in human things, and censure and murmur against its Almighty Disposer, and perhaps imagine that you could alter its course for

(1) Job xxviii. 18. (2) *Ibid.* 22.

the better, tell me what are you? What are you even when furnished with all the science attainable by man, or when boasting of a power that can keep millions of your fellow creatures enslaved to your will? Reflect, and you will see your image in the little infant crying in his cradle, knowing nothing of himself, nothing of his destiny, nothing of his surroundings, and powerless, I will not say to defend himself from external attacks, but to satisfy his most urgent needs; in a word, absolutely dependent on the provident care of a mother's love. The brute beast can live tranquil even in the midst of dangers, because it is without understanding; but how different is the case with man! Man seeks for tranquillity in the knowledge of things. Essentially rational, he is not, he may not be set at rest except through reason. Now what rest, what tranquillity can his reason give him in the midst of this boundless universe, where he is a mere atom, in the midst of a thousand forces, a thousand beings, potent and unyielding, which he sees moving all around him and acting according to laws which are unalterable, but regarding the true nature of which he is left completely in the dark?—the countless orbs that people space; the deep abysses lurking within the bowels of the earth; the immense heaving billows of the ocean that seem constantly to threaten the continents with submersion; the terrible hurricanes whose fury can uproot whole forests; the conflagrations that reduce cities to heaps of smouldering ruins; that invisible and mysterious electric substance in which a momentary disturbance of equilibrium seems to make the whole earth totter to its foundations; to say nothing of other forces,

invisible, unconquerable, and inevitable? Of what avail can man's natural knowledge or natural power be towards rendering him secure and fearless amid the operation of these inexorable forces? What can he, a frail mortal, do to withstand the encounters of beings so tremendous, and so vastly mightier than himself, nay, than all he could conceive by the utmost effort of his imagination, since the mere prick of a pin, the sting of an insect, a few grains of poison, a draught of water, or a breath of air, are quite sufficient to rob him of all his strength and to deprive him of life? Of a truth, only that Being Who knows all nature's laws and is above them all, could so direct man in the midst of so many powers incomparably superior to his own, as to enable him to avoid their encounters and to remain unhurt by their collisions: or, better, only this great Knower and universal Governor, could reveal to him the science of making himself in the long run superior to all these formidable powers, and securing the possession of happiness. Without this revelation, how could any one know for certain what would ultimately be to his advantage? If man, in seeking for what is best for him, were to rely merely on his own sagacity and forecastings, the most he could arrive at would be a conjectural and limited knowledge; and a knowledge like this would certainly not suffice to safeguard him against all those accidents which are liable to happen at any moment, are wholly beyond his control, and could in an instant scatter all his plans and fortunes to the winds. God alone, then, because knowing and directing all accidents in the universe, is able to tell unerringly beforehand what it

is that will eventually prove most beneficial to man himself. Hence the words: "God understandeth the way of wisdom, and He knoweth the place thereof; for He beholdeth the ends of the world, and looketh on all things that are under heaven; Who made a weight for the winds, and weighed the waters by measure, when He gave a law for the rain, and a way for the sounding storms" (that is to say, when He created and ordered the universe, and so disposed it that all things and events in it should work together for the good of His faithful ones); then it was that He could disclose to man the great secret of wisdom: "Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding." (1) This is the same as saying: "Herein lies the road to happiness, be wise and walk in it, nothing fearing; for the things and events of this world, great and small, although they are often foolishly supposed by many to work blindly and by chance, have, in point of fact, their course so calculated and fixed by Me from eternity, that they must, one and all, infallibly serve unto the saving and the perfecting of the righteous."

119. Here, therefore, we have again a manifest proof of the necessity of Faith and Revelation. For, even granting that man had the power of avoiding everything which he knew to be hurtful to him, he could not, with nothing but his own experience to guide him, find out all that would be hurtful; because his own experience never extends to all things and to all possible events, and cannot therefore serve as a ground whereon to form a correct idea of the course of the

(1) Job xxviii. 23–28.

universe taken in its entirety. Besides, experimental knowledge is only acquired with time; whereas man feels an urgent need of at once placing himself for certain on the way which he knows will lead him to happiness without first losing himself in the way of error and misery. A merely conjectural knowledge regarding the way to happiness, therefore, is not enough for him.

120. Nevertheless, he may find it of use after he has been encouraged by the Divine Revelations which hold out the assurance that, if he follows the road indicated to him, the Great Mover of all things will be his protector. Indeed, experimental knowledge, extending its range as mankind advances in age, brings to light ever new proofs in favour of the truth of Revelation, and of the reasonableness of faith; because the more perfect it grows, the more does it find reason in agreement with Divine Revelation, which teaches wisdom to all men with simplicity, with security, and at all times.

121. In conclusion, then, we must perforce admit that as human reason is incapable of finding out, by itself alone, the link which joins together all things in the universe, it cannot by its particular arguments solve all the difficulties that present themselves in connexion with Divine Providence, and therefore cannot set the human mind at rest. Thus, if a man were to say to his reason: "I will follow virtue as thou commandest, provided thou wilt undertake to assure me that I shall have happiness in return," how could reason give this pledge? All it could say in reply would be: "Experience shows me that, generally speaking, the most virtuous men are also the happiest."

But if, not satisfied with this answer, he were further to ask: "Canst thou assure me that I shall not die to-morrow? That my house shall not be burnt down? That my children shall have good health and a long life?" To such interrogations as these, reason and experience—which in these matters do not go beyond the world of sensible things, and do not even compass all of them—are absolutely dumb. They can only refer the interrogator to the paternal voice of Him Who governs the future as well as the present, and Who on this very account is called in Holy Writ "The guide of wisdom;" for that "In His hand are both we and our words, and all wisdom, and the knowledge and skill of works."(1) He, and He alone can from his high throne say to man with fullest authority: "Be virtuous, and thou shalt most certainly one day be glad. The things of the universe do not go hap-hazard; I have disposed them all with a view to the blessedness of the righteous. Whatever may befall thee, stand thou fast in the good purpose; for everything, even that which has a contrary appearance, happens for thy good; a good which thou shalt reap in the end, and which will endure for ever."

(1) Wisd. vii. 15, 16.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS IS THE RESULT OF THE KNOWABLE TAKEN IN ITS ENTIRETY: HUMAN REASON CANNOT ATTAIN TO THIS RESULT: GOD ALONE COMMUNICATES IT TO MAN: HENCE A NEW PROOF OF THE NECESSITY OF FAITH.

122. They who believe the Divine intimation, "Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding," have ever found in this belief all that is requisite for acquiring knowledge of the way of happiness.

This great truth was simply a corollary of all that God knew concerning the plan of the universe which He had conceived and destined to realization, but which He did not, indeed could not, reveal to man in all its parts (50–54); neither was this necessary, it being enough for man to know where all things ended. Certainly, man does not require much theoretical knowledge: all that he really needs is the practical corollary of which we are speaking, and which may truly be called the result of all the knowable. For this reason, the way of salvation is open to all men, quite irrespectively of their greater or smaller capabilities, provided only that they believe the words of God. Although God does not give all an equal amount of knowledge regarding things not necessary, He communicates to all alike the fruitful consequence of His

universal knowledge, a consequence which unmistakably points out the way to happiness. Not all men, therefore, can be learned; but all can be wise by yielding assent to the teaching of their infinitely wise Master. True wisdom is even by men placed in the ultimate conclusions of knowledge; (1) and the laborious science of the learned is, in ultimate analysis, directed to nothing else than the discovery of simple truths; it is not really valuable for its own sake; all its labours are spent for the sake of its results. Hence, from the moment that man's supreme Instructor and Lord delivered to him His Law, and set before him life if he kept, but death if he transgressed it, He by this mere fact consigned wisdom to him. God's essential veracity made belief in His words a duty for man, and this duty became more urgent inasmuch as man could not, as we have said, learn the way to happiness from his own experience, but solely from the authoritative declaration of his Creator. The limitation of his nature demanded that he should be led to happiness by the guide which alone knew the way.

123. Thus was man placed in the happy necessity of paying a most noble tribute to his Creator, the tribute of a blind faith in His utterances. I say *blind* faith, because man had no experimental proof of the truth of those utterances,—and not, of course, as implying that his belief in them, the submission of his intellect to such and so great an authority, the confession of his own insufficiency for the great purpose in question, was not most reasonable. Nothing is

(1) It would seem that most of the proverbs in common use among different nations belong to this class of conclusions.—*Tr.*

more reasonable than for a person, who has to travel over a difficult and unknown tract of country, to follow the directions of one who knows the way. Would not even the proud philosopher, the man of independent thought, who perhaps feels indignant at the bare mention of blind faith, if he should want to explore a wild Alpine district, consider it a matter of course to engage the services of some poor villager who had the reputation of being an experienced guide? He all at once forgets his great learning, and the simple rustic becomes his mentor. See how at the mere beckoning of this new instructor the philosopher blindly submits both mind and will; how he turns his steps hither and thither, just as he is told, even along most difficult paths and over most dangerous precipices, without asking for either geometrical or other demonstrations, of which the mountaineer would know nothing. Why all this? Simply because, according to current report, that man is supposed to know the way, whilst his own reason tells him that he does not. There is nothing, then, not only more reasonable, but also more needful and more common, than to submit one's reason to other people's authority; for no man's reason is alone sufficient for all his requirements. *A fortiori*, therefore, nothing is more conformable to reason than for us to trust ourselves to the veracity of the Creator, acknowledging, on the one hand, His power, and on the other our impotence; and hence fearing Him; because if we fail to comply with His most wise and most perfect will, He has all nature ready at His bidding to avenge Him, and a thousand other ways of punishing us. Well, therefore, may the fear of God and the shunning of His dis-

pleasure be described as the pith and substance of wisdom.

124. But if it was right that God should require us to believe in His words, essentially true, it was also fitting that He should keep hidden from us many of those truths which are not necessary for our salvation. For by acting in this way He was offering us a wider field for the exercise of our fidelity to Him; and at the same time leaving us more abundant materials for meditation which would make us advance further and further in a rational persuasion of His greatness and of our own littleness; and thus such small amount of knowledge as we could acquire by our efforts would serve to show more and more how human reason accords with Faith, and how its depositions tend to confirm and redound to the glory of truth.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONTINUATION—THE KNOWLEDGE OF TIMES AND PLACES TRANSCENDS THE POWERS OF HUMAN REASON.

125. In the order as well of nature as of grace, God, generally speaking, keeps hidden from us those particular things which depend upon the complex action of events, and which we, being ignorant of that complex action, cannot deduce by reasoning. Holy Writ tells us that among these divine secrets we must reckon the determining of times and places, a determination, nevertheless, which is of the greatest importance to the well ordered movement of the universe. "All things" (says Ecclesiastes) "have their season, and in their times all things pass under heaven, all being contained within their appointed places." (1)

126. The right distribution of times and places manifestly depends upon the law of fitness between each of the countless parts of the universe and the complex whole which results from them. Only one mind could conceive and apply such law, the mind which embraces all things in a single thought, since it is through its appointed times and places that the great whole is gradually accomplished.

127. It is exactly by referring to the wise distribution of these times and these places in which God's

(1) Eccles. iii. 1.

design is actually being carried into realization that Ecclesiastes convicts human reason of its hopeless ignorance of that design. For, considering that even sorrows, because ordained by God, must have a wise purpose, he says: "He hath made all things good in their time, and hath delivered the world to the consideration of men, so that they cannot find out the work which God hath made from the beginning to the end."(1)

128. Hence, when the Apostles, after the Resurrection, asked our Lord if He would at that time restore again the Kingdom of Israel, He answered: "It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father hath put in His power; but you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you; and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth."(2) This was an intimation to them that they must not trouble themselves about the particular dispositions which the Heavenly Father thinks fit to make of human things, but must be satisfied with knowing that it is He Who makes them. Let them only do His will with simplicity, and all would be well with them in the end, however contrary appearances might be to this expectation.

129. Indeed, appearances were then and afterwards altogether against the restoration of that great Kingdom of Israel, for which the Disciples of Christ looked with so much hope and eagerness of desire. But these gloomy appearances did not in the least dishearten them. Certain, even as Abraham was, that God, rather than suffer His word to be made void, would, from their very ashes raise them up to a glorious immortality,

(1) Eccles. iii. 10, 11. (2) Acts i. 7, 8.

they cheerfully offered themselves to death; and the innocent blood which for three long centuries flowed in torrents by order of the cruel masters of the world, only served to strengthen that lively Faith which kept on saying with holy Job: "Even if He should kill me, I will trust in Him."(1)

Such greatness of soul, such long-suffering endurance could not have been produced by the forecastings of human reason or human experience, but solely by the infallible promises of the Creator, embraced with that faith which fixes its loving gaze on a light immense, indeed, but removed far beyond the sphere of this creation. Hence our Lord tells us in St. Matthew, that "of that day or hour" (of the end of the world) "no man knoweth. . . . but the Father alone,"(2) on Whose creative will, common to the Divine Trinity whereof the Father is the fontal principle, the universe depends.

130. As we have seen that in the Book of Job the name of wisdom is taken to signify, not the wisdom belonging to God Himself, but that which He communicates to men; even so, in many other places of Holy Writ, God is said to know, or some such phrase is used when it is intended to indicate God's knowledge, not as existing in Himself, but in so far as He is pleased to communicate it to men. Indeed, in the Inspired Volume God is almost invariably represented under that particular form in which He has connected Himself with the universe, and made Himself knowable to us; and all our reasonings concerning Him are intelligible and true inasmuch as that form is presupposed in them. Thus we can understand how it could be affirmed with truth that the day or hour of the last

(1) Job xiii. 15. (2) Matt. xxiv. 36.

judgment is not known "either to the angels of heaven, or even to the Son, but to the Father only."(1) The Father knows it of Himself; the Son knows it inasmuch as He is in the Father, begotten by Him; but, as man, although He may if He will, know it by reading it in the Divine Essence, nevertheless He does not know it in a human way, nor in a way which is communicable to men or to angels. Hence the title of *human* would not, rightly speaking, be applicable to that knowledge which is not communicated to any mere man; for every cognition which we are wont to qualify by this title must, of its own nature, be possessed by at least some one of our kind, and be attributable to him as a human person. But the knowledge of the last day, as also, in general, of the times and moments through which the Most High moves and distributes events, and infallibly leads all things to their destined end, is the Divine secret wherein it may be said that the Eternal is pleased to conceal His dread power, that power whereby, without causing any disturbance in nature, and as it were by a glance of the eye, He throws down the ungodly and thrusts them out even from the very ends of the earth, leaving the righteous triumphant; an act which holy Job sets down as one of the works of the greatness of the Divinity. (2)

131. Hence also our Divine Master inculcates on us continual watching: "Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is." (3) A most just and most weighty reason, this, for watchfulness! He describes the Heavenly Father as a lord, who before starting on a journey, divides the duties of the administration of his property among his servants,

(1) Mark xiii. 32. (2) Job xxxviii. 13. (3) Mark xiii. 33.

but leaves them wholly in the dark as to when they may expect him to return. As this may be at any moment, and all of a sudden, and on the other hand the warning is meant to apply to all men alike, he ends by saying: "What I say to you I say to all: watch."(1)

132. From the fact of the Eternal reserving the knowledge of times to Himself there arises also this advantage, that whenever the turn of events happens to be such as suddenly to belie all human prognostications, we feel powerfully struck with a deep reverential sense of the marvellous greatness of the works of God. In truth, men are at every moment, I should almost say, caught unawares by the Omnipotent; for they never know, they never can know, the future for certain, nor foresee the results of their own actions, nor divine the combination of the new circumstances which supervene, and from which it would be vain for them to try to escape or to screen themselves. For the sphere of mundane things is continually changing, and thus man is constantly involved in fresh difficulties and complications in which he has no practical knowledge to guide him; and as a consequence, by the very means which he improvises for meeting an emergency, and for having thought of which he perhaps considers himself very wise, he is unwittingly led whither he would least have expected. Only at last, when the course of things is fast approaching its inevitable termination, the veil drops from his eyes, and he sees his mistake. Then he may set himself to review at leisure the whole of what has just passed, and perhaps find it all most natural;

(1) Mark xiii. 37.

he may even reproach himself for not having foreseen things that are so obvious, and attribute his oversight to mere accident, and promise to himself, and hope, that he will know better another time; and so go on deluding and deceiving himself again and again in punishment for not attending to the Divine admonition, and for refusing to acknowledge that the great key of events, viz., the knowledge of the times, is not in his hand. Unlike the Eternal, to Whom all the past as well as all the future is always present, we are never at the same moment spectators of a whole series of events. Changing as time changes, we only witness these events singly, according as they appear one after another in their appointed turn on the ever-shifting scene. Hence their marvellous connexion is not observed by us, until, well-nigh gone and no longer revocable, they become useless records consigned to our memory. While each event was present, it drew the whole of our attention to itself, as if there were no other to follow. The impression it made upon our sensitive nature, sometimes the noise which accompanied it, the complication of elements which it involved, always the rapidity with which it passed, the gleam of a thousand hopes which it flashed upon us, the passions which it set in motion; all this conspired to deprive us of even that small degree of reflection which we might have brought to bear on the uncertain future, and to render us presumptuous, over-confident, over-buoyant; so that in the end we are like those persons who, having at early dawn dreamt of kingdoms and of treasures, wake up to find their illusion dissipated by the rays of the rising sun. May we open our eyes at last! May we profit by

experience! And seeing, by innumerable facts which are written in the history of all ages, how, in the hands of the Supreme Ruler, the tide of events has ever ended in a way contrary to the vain hopes of the impious, even when every appearance seemed to be in their favour, let us magnify His sovereign Wisdom, and in all humility exclaim with the Apostle: "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and recompense shall be made him? For of Him, and by Him, and in Him, are all things: to Him be glory for ever, Amen." (1)

(1 Rom. xi. 33–36.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN REASON, AS EXPOUNDED ABOVE, FAR FROM PROVING THAT REASON AND FAITH ARE IN MUTUAL ANTAGONISM, PROVE THE VERY REVERSE.

133. To any one who has followed with attention what we have said thus far in regard to the limitations inherent in the nature and constitution of the human mind, it must, I think, be quite plain that man cannot secure the tranquillity he so much needs, nor attain to happiness, unless he is assisted by Faith.

Nevertheless, the question of these limitations has always been a dangerous one to deal with; for if the human mind is credited with larger powers than belong to it, one runs the risk of rendering it presumptuous through an illusory belief of knowing more than it does or can ever know; and if, from fear of this evil, its powers are unduly restricted, there is great danger of falling into scepticism. Among the philosophers who have treated this subject with any degree of penetration, there are perhaps very few that did not stumble against one or other of these two rocks. But if I am not mistaken, the limitations which I have assigned will keep us equally clear of both, that is to say, of *scepticism* on the one hand, and, on the other, of what has been called the excessive *dogmatism* of reason. If these limitations shew that human reason, abandoned to itself

and taught only by the experience of sensible things, does not suffice to render us tranquil in respect of the way in which Providence disposes events, but that it needs for this purpose to be aided by Faith in God's words; they at the same time afford us clear evidence of the conformity and harmony existing between reason and Faith; inasmuch as reason, following its own dictates, invokes the aid of Faith, and Faith in its turn instructs and enlightens reason.

But that no doubt may remain as to the friendly accord of these two noble guides of man, it will be advisable to examine better in what the antagonism between them, if such there were, might consist, and then prove that there is nothing in human reason which can in any true sense be considered as opposed or hostile to Faith.

The relation conceivable as diversifying reason from Faith may be of three kinds.

First, it might be a relation of simple *diversity*, a negative relation on the side of reason; that is to say, reason in this case would not positively know anything that contradicts the teachings of Faith, but would merely be wanting in the knowledge of those teachings. Clearly, this kind of difference would in no way impair either the authority of reason in those things which it knows, or the truth of what Faith proposes to be believed. For our ignorance can never be taken as an argument against the truth of what, although not known to ourselves, is affirmed by a most grave and infallible authority. No man knows everything; and as that portion of knowledge in which one is wanting does not invalidate the truth of what he knows, so *vice versâ* such portion of knowledge as one

happens to possess does not prove that what he is ignorant of must be regarded as false.

And this is exactly the kind of diversity between reason and Faith which flows from the natural limitations we have enunciated above. The effect of those limitations is simply to determine a certain class of truths lying beyond such as are knowable by human reason itself. But in this difference of objects there is no contradiction, no conflict; on the contrary, it is the true motive for their close alliance, since it is exactly because reason is ignorant of some portion of the truth, that Faith offers to lend its kindly aid in supplying the deficiency.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

THE APPARENT CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN REASON AND FAITH ARISE FROM THE FALLIBILITY OF REASON, AND ARE REMOVED BY REASON ACKNOWLEDGING ITSELF FALLIBLE.

134. *Secondly*, reason and Faith may be conceived as standing in the relation of mutual *opposition*. This opposition, if merely the result of the manner in which reason arrives at certain conclusions, would be apparent only; it would be real, if the principles of reason were themselves directly contrary to the truths of Faith.

135. The first of these two kinds of opposition is certainly possible, because human reason, in its deductions, is liable to error, and also because it has not always a sufficient number of facts whereon to base an argument both sound and complete.(1) But these contradictions, being only apparent, do not constitute any real contrariety or hostility. From the moment reason comes to understand, that, owing to limits by which it is hemmed in on all sides, it is ignorant of many things, from that moment, I say, it of necessity

(1) *Sound and complete.* Here the reader will do well to remember the Author's note to no. 12, and all that he has said to prove that the experience of this life can never supply man with all the *data* which would be indispensable for enabling him to judge correctly of the true and ultimate bearing of events as arranged by Divine Providence.—*Tr.*

feels morally bound to acknowledge this ignorance before Faith, and to bow down to her teaching. Consequently, when it finds in its *conclusions* anything contrary to Faith, it must, remembering its own imperfection, correct them by the light of revealed truth. The cause of these erroneous deductions is very obvious: given the recognition of the ignorance inseparable from reason and of its undeniable liability to error, they must be expected, they must be foreseen as a matter of course. The acknowledgment of one's ignorance is virtually an acknowledgment of one's errors. But reason cannot but be aware of its ignorance: are not the limitations of which we have spoken so many facts discovered by reason reflecting upon itself? If, then, reason ought to submit to Faith because of the *limitation* of its knowledge, still more should it do so because of its *liability to error*. Having already implicitly made this submission by recognizing its natural limitation and fallibility, it can no longer consistently rebel against Faith under the pretext that a certain conclusion at which it has arrived is at variance with the utterances of the latter.

The case, however, would be different, if Faith were found to be in direct opposition to the very *principles* of reason, which are necessarily free from error. The hostility or contradiction would then be, not apparent, but real; and reason, therefore, could not submit to Faith, since it is impossible for reason to renounce the first principles whence it receives its movement, as well as guidance to direct it in all its steps. If reason were to give up these principles, it would destroy itself; for it is these, and nothing else, that constitute it; and no being can destroy itself. Now this is

precisely the kind of contradiction which is not found between reason and Faith, which has never been found, and which does not follow from the limitations I have propounded.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SENSISM, BY UNDULY LIMITING HUMAN REASON, LEADS TO SCEPTICISM.

136. *Thirdly:* But could not reason raise a doubt about its own principles?

I answer: It may at least imagine that it can do so. But as the fact of its holding these principles as true, and at the same time finding them contrary to Faith, would imply the condemnation and destruction of Faith; so the fact of its entertaining a doubt about them would imply its own destruction together with that of Faith.

137. This would be nothing short of *Scepticism*, a most pernicious error, from which, however, as I must now endeavour to show, the theory I propound on the limitations of human reason is very far removed.

Whilst I am doing so, the reader will also have an opportunity of seeing what some modern writers have said on a question of such great importance, and will be able to judge for himself as to whether I have contributed anything toward its solution. I could say much on the ecclesiastical writers, who have always been, substantially, in possession of the truth; but leaving these aside, I will confine my remarks to those authors of recent times whom the world has admired most, and proclaimed the discoverers of great truths.

Locke was the first who revived the scholastic principle which had been overthrown in the opinion of men by Descartes, viz., "that we can understand nothing of which we have not first had sensible experience." But he explained and applied this principle in a much poorer and grosser way than the Schoolmen had done. He derived the whole of human knowledge from sensation and reflection. (1) Condillac, allured by the desire of simplicity, thought he could improve on Locke, and explain all knowledge by means of a single principle, that of sensation. Even the supreme rules of judgment, (2) which the Schoolmen knew we receive from nature and see by a kind of instinct, could, according to this philosopher, be formed of sensations. Unfortunately, neither of these authors seems ever to have had the least notion of those great difficulties which have always presented themselves to profound thinkers when they sought to explain the genesis of human cognitions. Whatever occurs to their presumptuous and very limited understanding, they give forth in a singular tone of assurance accompanied with a certain air of contempt for all those who preceded them. If in disputing with their school you venture to give utterance to some profound idea, you are ridiculed for your pains. No arduous thought, no intense reflection must disturb the tranquillity of that complacent philosophy. "What is the use of troubling about these things? It is impossible

(1) In his famous *Essay on Human Understanding*, Book II., Ch. I., Locke, referring to sensation and reflection, says: "These two are the fountains of knowledge, whence all ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring." Nearly the whole of this first book is an attempt to prove that there are no principles or ideas innate in our mind.—*Tr.*

(2) *i.e.*, The first principles of reason.—*Tr.*

for us to know them. You must not drive us back to the abstruse subtleties, the unintelligible metaphysics of the dark ages; for, thank God, the world is now more enlightened and refined than it was." This is the sort of refutation which one hears the sensists offer to all systems that are above their superficiality. Hence the annihilation, under their reign, of all serious knowledge, of all intellectual elevation.

138. Yet what do these philosophers tell us about the limitations of the human mind?

As they do not find the least difficulty in deriving from sensations whatever they like, so as a matter of course they do not find any limits to human reason in this respect. Therefore, in their system, reason becomes inflated with pride and full of arrogance in the vain belief of being able to learn everything which man needs by means of sensible experience alone, on which they rest the most extravagant hopes.

But as it is quite manifest, on the other hand, that there are many things, for example the substance of bodies, which can in no wise be apprehended by corporeal sensitivity, they found themselves compelled to place a certain limit to the human knowable. They were not, however, the men to be disconcerted, or to doubt the truth of their views on account of such a difficulty. If the knot could not be untied, it must be cut. Gratuitously, yet with the authoritative tone of regenerators of science, they denied the possibility of man knowing anything of the essences and substances of things. This purely gratuitous limit set to knowledge reduced philosophy and the knowable itself to little enough, indeed to nothing; while at the same time it failed to humble human reason, which recognized

the experience of the senses as the only source of knowledge, and, by a glaring self-contradiction, pronounced that source to be inexhaustible. Thus the whole of philosophy was made to consist in the science of accidents, (1) and it led man to rest satisfied with them. It indirectly helped the progress of the material arts, but it enervated and annihilated mental and moral science, and produced an age at once extremely superficial and fiercely proud in its superficiality.

Hume came next, and retained as a thing beyond question the principle of Locke's philosophy, that man has no other source whence to draw his knowledge than the sensations produced in him by the action of external bodies.(2) But he was a man of a far keener and more logical mind than Locke; and it is presumable that such a principle was received by him as current prejudices are received, as propositions which are accepted on trust, and supposed by everybody to be true. No one thinks of submitting these propositions to examination, because it is

(1) *i.e.*, The sensible qualities of things.—*Tr.*

(2) The only right method to be followed in philosophy is, undoubtedly, that which starts from facts; and to have proclaimed this method and rendered it universal is the merit of the modern school. On the other hand, passing over certain facts and building upon incomplete observations, are its continual defects. To know how to observe all the facts, to seize even upon those which most easily escape notice, as for instance those of our own spiritual feeling and consciousness, and then to accept impartially the legitimate consequences of the same, these are the qualifications of a true philosopher. To this end, a most vigilant and continual reflection upon oneself is necessary. That observation which is only able to take note of what happens externally to ourselves, of the impressions received by our corporeal senses from the action of matter, is observation of the grossest and most vulgar kind. It produces, not a mature philosophy, but a philosophy in the state of infancy. Such is the philosophy of Locke, of Condillac, of Destutt-Tracy, etc.

taken for granted that they have been examined before and found correct; and people do not care to do over again what they believe has been done before them. It would seem a mere waste of time, a finding oneself always at the beginning. But if Hume admitted the Lockian principle without examination, he did not derive from it the human cognitions with the Lockian simplicity. He saw very clearly that the principles of reason, as commonly understood, could not be deduced from mere experience, because they present themselves as universal, whereas experience, however repeated and multiplied, never gives anything more than particular facts. Nevertheless, the principle that "the whole of what man knows comes from the experience of the senses" remained fixed in his mind as a truth beyond discussion. What was the result? Consistency led him to call in question the validity of the principles of reason, inasmuch as neither their universality nor their necessity was contained, or could by any possibility be contained, in that experience which he held to be the only source of knowledge. He therefore set down these principles as a fiction of man's imagination, an effect of blind habit. Seeing them realized in experience a very great number of times, man, through the association of ideas, and the partiality he naturally has for analogies, *supposes* that they must always be realized in the same manner, and so he takes them for general principles, whereas in reality they are nothing of the kind. In this way Locke, by exaggerating the capabilities of sensible experience and rendering human reason proud and too bold in its pronouncements, opened the way, quite unawares, to the abyss of Hume's scepticism, and to

the debasement of that very reason whose dignity he sought to assert.

139. Such indeed is the invariable result of human aberrations. Every error soon produces another which is the very reverse of itself; and so our poor humanity, owing to error, is necessarily abandoned to agitation, and distracted by opinions the most opposed to each other. It was the principle of *causality* that chiefly arrested the attention of Hume. Being unable to see how it could be deduced, in its general form, from experience, he, as we have said, called it in question, or rather denied it altogether. Now if this principle is abolished, our mind has no longer any means of passing from sensible to non-sensible things. Consequently, for the consistent sensist, whatever did not fall under the senses had, to say the least, a dubious and uncertain existence. Thus, reason being cast down from its throne, the right of witnessing to the truth remained with the senses alone, and these of course could not witness to any except physical things. I say *witness*, but I am wrong; for, alas! even this testimony of the senses, such as it was, could no longer be considered as valid in the eyes of reason. Hence we find it, almost at the same time, vigorously assailed by Berkeley, and the senses dethroned—condemned as so many ministers of illusion to the mind, which is deceived by their representations into believing that external bodies have a real existence, whereas in point of fact they have none.(1)

(1) For a fuller criticism on Locke, Condillac, Hume and Berkeley, see the *Origin of Ideas*, 35–98, 311–321, 683–691.—*Tr.*

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM, BY RENDERING HUMAN REASON INCAPABLE OF ATTAINING TO THE TRUTH, LEADS TO SCEPTICISM.

140. In this state was philosophy when Kant appeared—a much more powerful thinker than those I have just named, yet not able to escape the influence of that spirit of sophistry which was a distinguishing feature of the age.

It may be said that he opposed himself to all his predecessors in this, that he found the way of accumulating into a single whole the various doctrines and errors of them all, while at the same time he clothed them in a new language and developed them.

141. He felt the force of the reasoning of Hume, which proved that however often facts of a uniform character might be repeated, no truly necessary and universal principles could be derived from experience. On the other hand, he recognized and maintained against Hume, that the principles of reason, admitted by all mankind and in all times, could not be called in question. He said, therefore, that as Locke, by his want of judgment in crediting experience with being the source of these principles, had puffed up human reason with an overweening confidence in its own ability to find out all truths by mere experience, it was perfectly right for Hume to come forward and put some check on

this arrogance. What Hume did, however, amounted to nothing more than a *censure* on reason; for he simply demonstrated that the products of experience, and therefore the horizon to which the vision of reason extended, were not by any means so large as reason vainly supposed. But Hume ought to have gone further than this; he ought to have given us a *critique* or critical judgment of reason itself. It was not enough to tell us in general that there was a certain horizon beyond which the eye of reason had no power to see; we should also have been told distinctly what was the exact line that bounded this horizon—in short, what were precisely the confines within which the human mind is inclosed.

This was the difficult task to which Kant addressed himself.

142. Having premised that both Locke and Hume were wrong—the first in asserting that the principles of reason are the result of experience, (1) the second in denying their truth, universality and necessity—he imagined a hypothesis which should reconcile everything. I say *hypothesis* because we must never forget that the Kantian system is, after all, nothing but a hypothesis. He imagined, then, that the principles in question were a creation of man's reason itself, or rather, properties and, as it were, spontaneous acts of man's nature; so that reason could not help admitting these principles in judging of whatever presented itself to it. And since by virtue of this natural disposition reason vested the sensations received from experience with a certain universality and neces-

(1) Hence Kant introduced into his system *pure reason*—that is to say, reason wholly independent of experience.

sity, he affirmed that it was these concepts and principles of reason that rendered sensible experience possible—in other words, caused us to intellectively perceive and to judge of sensible objects.

Now these concepts and principles, innate in us, were the confines which Kant assigned to human reason; because this faculty in all its operations was necessitated to use them and no others. Consequently, it had no power to judge of them, hence it could not judge them except by having recourse to themselves. It was therefore compelled to believe in them with a blind faith.

143. This is what Kant would have us accept as a refutation of Hume's *scepticism*, who had cast a doubt on the validity of the principles of reason. But, in truth, it is a sorry refutation; for it only consists in offering us another and worse kind of *scepticism*. If Hume inflicted a slight wound on truth, Kant pierced it to the very heart. Hume questioned the existence of general principles, Kant admitted their existence—nay, their necessity, inasmuch as he supposed them to be identified with the nature *(connaturali)* of human reason; but by representing them as an offspring, an effect, of its subjective forms, he rendered them incapable of witnessing to truth, which is essentially objective, and therefore of witnessing to the real existence of beings external to us. For in his system the necessity and universality of the said principles are nothing but formal laws of the mind, which, through them, sees things in a determinate and constant mode.

According to Kant, then, whatever the human mind perceives is merely an apparition in the mind itself, as, so to speak, in a *camera obscura*. Thus the mind cannot

see anything really outside itself, or otherwise than as prescribed by its own restricted laws. Kant, therefore, by placing the mind in this position, does the same as would be done by a man who should light a lamp merely in order that he might see the lamp itself. This is what he dignifies by the name of *transcendental idealism*, in opposition to the *empirical idealism* of Berkeley, whom he finds in error for having said that only bodies are mere appearances, whereas he ought to have said the same of all the principles of reason as well. He refutes the *scepticism* of Hume by feigning to deny the limitation which the latter, by ignoring the validity of the principle of causation, had imposed on human reason; but in reality he extends that limitation by subjectivizing and invalidating all the principles of reason without exception. He refuted the *idealism* of Berkeley by transporting it from a part of the human knowable to the whole. He refutes *relative* scepticism and idealism by establishing *absolute* scepticism and idealism. And not only does he find manifest contradictions in experience and reason, but with great authority he pronounces that "It is nowise possible to tranquillize pure reason in contradiction with itself;" heading by these words a chapter of his philosophy.(1)

In this way a theory which professed to be purely a *criticism* of reason was taught by this philosopher in the most *dogmatic* tone the world had ever heard; and that was declared to be a supremely true

(1) Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. See in particular Part ii., *i.e. Transcendental Logic*, Bk. I., ch. 2, sec. ii., *Transcendental Dialectics*, Bk. II., ch. 2., sec vi., and *Appendix to Transcendental Dialectics*.

system which tended to do away with the very possibility of truth.(1)

Before comparing what seem to me the limits justly assignable to human reason with those assigned to it by Kant, it may not be useless to inquire whence *transcendental idealism* originated.

144. Who would believe that this system sprang from *sensism*,—nay, even from *materialism?*

And yet, let me repeat it, every error leads to an opposite error, and is connected with it by a bond as intimate as it is incongruous.

Locke had laid it down as a principle that sensible matter is the source of all human knowledge. On this principle, Hume, more consistent than Locke, had destroyed reason by depriving it of all power to know the truth, and leaving this power, as far as might be, exclusively in the possession of the senses. Berkeley completed the work by despoiling the senses of that pretended possession. But Kant, taking an entirely material view of the human spirit, devised a way by which sensitivity, intellect, and reason might be reduced to one and the same level. Let us see how this

(1) It seems impossible that Kant should not have perceived that, by denying to theoretical reason the power of pronouncing on the absolute truth of things, he was involving in ruin all former philosophical systems, and his own along with them. The *critical philosophy* has passed capital sentence against itself: it cannot pretend to any but an apparent and subjective truth; nor avails it to say that it is only a *negative* system, a system which destroys and does not build up. Whether the propositions of which it is formed be negative or positive, it is always a fact that they have only a subjective or apparent truth. By no stretch of ingenuity will it ever be possible for its defenders to evade the force of this argument. If the system consists essentially in doubt, why propose it? And if doubt is proposed as a certain system, what right has one to propose as certain a system which annihilates all certainty?

materialistic idea of our spirit led him to such a conclusion.

145. He observed that it is a property of matter to have, at one and the same time, one form only and that limited, to the exclusion of all other forms. Seeing this, he supposed (*gratuitously* be it noted) that the same must be the case with human reason. As, therefore, this reason was restricted within certain determinate forms, and not according to truth, he did not perceive that *the form of our reason was truth itself;* and that it was owing exactly to this one only form that reason did not impart to its objects any of its own limitations, and therefore did not counterfeit them, but affirmed them simply according to *truth.*

146. Kant explained his sophism also by the simile of a mirror. A mirror reflects the image of things in conformity with the configuration of its surface, so that they are counterfeited, elongated, contracted, distorted, broken into pieces, or jumbled together, as the case may be. Such, said he (and always *gratuitously*), is the human intelligence. It does not perceive things save in so far as it imparts to them its own form and thus informs them with itself. Consequently, it never can make certain of what they really are in themselves. Indeed, it cannot even make certain of their existence, because the objects it perceives are never the things themselves but only their representations. Nor, again, has it any means of passing from the representations to the things, for the simple reason that those always remain wholly external to it in the same way that one body is always outside other bodies. By thus materializing our spirit, and consequently judging of it in accordance with what is seen to take

place in bodies, was Kant led to *transcendental idealism*, namely, to a system which incapacitates man from having any knowledge but what is merely apparent and subjective. (1)

(1) Modern materialism, like all the great errors of the human mind, had a slow and secret progress of formation. The universal disposition to it must be sought (who would believe it ?) principally in the XVII. century. From causes which it would take me too long here to explain, the mind even of men otherwise well-intentioned was then beginning to receive a certain tinge of it. In proof of this, as also of what I have ventured to say on the progress of the thoughts of Kant, I will beg the reader's attention to the following passage from Pascal, in which clear traces of materialism can easily be seen. Speaking of the impossibility of our proving the truth of the principles of reason, Pascal says : "Cette impuissance ne conclut autre chose que la faiblesse de notre raison : mais non pas l'incertitude de toutes nos connaissances, comme ils (les pyrrhoniens) le prétendent. Car la connaissance des premiers principes, comme, par exemple, qu'il y a *espace, temps, mouvement, nombre, matière*, est aussi ferme qu' aucune de celles que nos raisonnements nous donnent. Et c'est sur ces connaissances d'intelligence et de sentiment qu'il faut que la raison s'appuie, et qu'elle fonde tout son discours. Je sens qu'il y a trois dimensions dans l'espace, et que les nombres sont infinis ; et la raison démontre ensuite qu'il n' y a point deux nombres carrés dont l'un soit double de l'autre." (*Pensées de Pascal, 2e Partie, art.* 1.) Let the reader observe in this passage :—

1st. The propensity to quote *space, time, motion, number, matter*, etc., as examples of the first principles of reason. Clearly, of these things it will never be possible to prove the *necessity*, as that of the first principles is proved. They are not first principles, but first *data*, not to be confounded with the principles themselves.

2ndly. By saying that the knowledge we have of these supposed first principles is as certain as the consequences which are drawn from them by reasoning, one leaves oneself open to the reply "that, therefore, principles and consequences are alike uncertain—in other words, that those principles are merely subjective."

3rdly. To affirm that the impossibility of demonstrating the first *principles of reason* arises from the weakness of our intelligence, and not from the fact that those principles are intuitively true, and therefore incapable of demonstration, is already a great step toward Kantism. The concession that we cannot demonstrate those principles because of the weakness of our intelligence, supposes that they, of their nature, are susceptible of demon-

Marvellous chastisement of human pride! Whenever man's reason attempts to raise itself above its own natural level, it finds itself, by that very means, and quite unexpectedly, cast down with ignominy to the ground. Kant, by his *transcendental idealism*, was filling reason with self-conceit. He would have it to be a light to itself. He constituted it the creator of the universe, which it bore within itself, and which was continually emanating from the laws of its activity. Strange honour! The entire universe is changed into a dream; the Deity is nothing but a desire; the human spirit is indeed a great Lord, but only of chimeras; truth no longer exists, and thus the light of the sun is extinguished that a will-o'-the-wisp may be put in place of it.

Let us consider for a moment the tortuous windings of this system. It sprang from *materialism;* it went on to divinize the human spirit, by making it the only beginning and end of things, and it unhappily ended again in *materialism*. For where, according to this system, could the seat of what we call *matter* be, save in the very nature of the soul? Moreover, are not all things, in this system, reduced to one only substance, which may be called *matter* or *spirit*, just as we please, according to the divers properties with which we consider it endowed? And have we not thus at last reached *Pantheism?* The *Materialist* posits one only substance by considering matter; the

stration. Now, what is of its nature susceptible of demonstration, and at the same time is not demonstrated, cannot be admitted as true. In such case, the first principles of reason would be conceded gratuitously. They would, therefore, have only a gratuitous, or subjective, not an objective truth. This is Kantism.

Spinozist posits one only substance by considering God; and the *Transcendental Idealist* is bound to do the same by considering exclusively the human spirit. Is not this one identical system, which starts from three different points in order to arrive at the same goal? Whether these three entities be real or apparent, all equally admit them and admit their properties, all make the three to consist of one only being, and to this one being they attribute all the properties of each. Is not this being always the same, just as a body made up of three elements is always the same whichever of those elements may happen to be taken first in composing it, provided that when the other two be added, the three remain so completely mingled and confused together that one sole and indistinguishable mass is left? If, therefore, the Materialists arrive at their system by the first step, the *Transcendental Idealists* and the *Pantheists* arrive at the same by the second. For *Transcendental Idealism* identifies itself with *Materialism* by stopping at the human spirit, and *Pantheism* identifies itself with it by stopping at God. No wonder, then, that Kant, immediately after making the first step, should warily turn round and say to his followers: "You see that I am no materialist—far from it; I am, on the contrary, the defender and champion of the human spirit." Many were simple enough to believe him; yet it would have been easy to reply: "Pray, sir, go on till you have come to your journey's end, for then we shall be better able to judge of the true character of your doctrine." Indeed, this is the most dangerous snare of this writer, that although he ends by teaching, I should almost say, every kind of error, yet he proceeds by very long marches, during

which he frequently halts in order to shelter himself from the imputation of those errors, under the pretext that he has not yet arrived at them.

147. But not only in the beginning or the middle of this system is materialism to be found, it lies deeply rooted in its very heart. For, why does Kant tell you that it is impossible for you to know for certain the existence of things, unless because they are external to your mind? He, therefore, unconsciously unites the idea of space with spiritual beings, and cannot conceive a spirit devoid of matter that acts on the mind itself. When the universe is supposed to be a mere apparition, and God is conceived only as a being that occupies some place in this universe, the existence of both the one and the other is, of course, rendered dubious. How truly, then, do the Holy Scriptures say that a material spirit blunts the mental powers, and that only a pure and spiritual soul is capable of attaining to the right perception of non-sensible objects. Hence they attribute to wisdom the property of mobility and subtilty. "For wisdom is more mobile than all mobile things, and reacheth everywhere by reason of her purity. For she is a vapour of the power of God, and a certain pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty God; and therefore no defiled thing cometh into her. For she is the brightness of eternal light, and the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, and the image of His goodness."(1)

(1) Wisd. vii. 24–26.—For a fuller criticism of the Philosophy of Kant, see Essay on the *Origin of Ideas*, 301–384.—*Tr.*

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE LIMITATIONS ABOVE ASSIGNED TO HUMAN REASON DO NOT LEAD TO SCEPTICISM.

148. Thus from Locke to Kant did philosophy, in spite of so many efforts, go on wandering farther and farther astray, and entangling itself in its very progress, until men grew weary of it, and lost all faith in instructors who were only distracting their minds with doctrines that were continually changing. Hence we find that the schools of to-day (A.D. 1826), instead of teaching any definite philosophical system, content themselves with describing, in an easy popular style, the vicissitudes through which philosophy has passed—a series of long struggles in search of truth, and of manifold errors.

If philosophy is to be reinstated in the love and respect of men, I think it will be necessary, in part, to return to the teachings of the ancients, and, in part, to give those teachings the benefit of modern methods—facility of style, a breadth of application embracing the daily wants of human life, and, finally, to cement all the parts into one complete whole. The Schoolmen, now made so little of, are the link connecting ancient with modern philosophers, a link which ought to be carefully studied. For, although the scholastic philosophy in its later period became degenerate, childish, and ridiculous, it was not so in

its great writers, among whom it suffices to mention the prince of Italian philosophers, St. Thomas of Aquin, whose cherished footsteps it is, and it always will be, my fond wish to trace in the arduous and perilous paths of thought. But to return to our subject:—

149. The limitations assigned above humble us, it is true, but they do not plunge us into the frightful abyss of *scepticism*, by declaring our mind incapable of knowing the truth or of being certain of it.

The first limitation was that we cannot in this life form a positive idea of the Supreme and Necessary Being, for the reason that, to do this, it would be necessary for us to see how, in God, existence, essence, and operation are identically the same thing (Chap. xiv).

Now our inability to see this does not arise from any incapacity of our mind to know the truth, or from its being restricted and constrained by any particular form. It arises solely from the course which we are obliged to take in rising to the conception of this great and most simple Being. We must, for this purpose, make use of an imperfect instrument, our bodily organs, and of most imperfect materials and symbols, viz., the subtances of the visible universe, or our inner consciousness—spiritual, but finite. We do not positively understand the nature of this Being, because He does not, in the present life, show Himself to us, nor fall under our perception; neither is there among all the other beings which are seen or perceived by us, a single one that has a nature common with His; because God has nothing in common with creatures. Faith comes to our aid and promises that we shall see Him

when this curtain that now hides Him from us shall be removed. Then, in the words of St. Paul, "we shall know Him even as we are known" (1) by Him, and, in those of St. John, " we shall see Him as He is."(2)

150. The unfaithful mirror, then, the mirror that does not render a true likeness of the Divine Being, is, according to the Apostle, not our mind, as Kant maintains, but the created universe which we contemplate. The mind is merely the eye that looks into this mirror and sees what is in it, but does not see God, because God is not there. Hence, in conformity with this doctrine, St. John observes that, at present, not only are we ignorant of a vast deal that relates to God, but we cannot even form anything like a true idea of our state as it will be in the next life; because that state is not as yet disclosed to our view. We can only conjecture it, and that very imperfectly, from what we now see of the things around us. He says: "We are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him ; because we shall see Him as He is." (3)

The first of the limitations assigned above, therefore, regards only those invisible things which have no adequate similitude in visible ones, whereas Kant by placing the limitation, not in the method which we are obliged to follow in acquiring knowledge, but in the cognitive faculty itself, corrupts the source, and involves in darkness and uncertainty all our cognitions alike.

151. The human mind, as I conceive it, is not restricted, is not limited. It has only one form, which

(1) 1. Cor. xiii. 12. (2) 1. John iii. 2. (3) *Ibid.*

I call the FORM OF TRUTH, (1) and which does not in any way restrict it; because it is not a particular, but a universal, categoric form, such, that is to say, as to embrace in its own simplicity all possible forms, whether specific or generic, and to measure all that is limited. With this one form I think I am in a position to explain whatever in the operations of the human soul transcends the senses and experience. This, however, is not the place for expounding a philosophic system, but only for proving that the limitations which I have ascribed to the human mind, humiliating though they be, keep us wholly free from the desolating *scepticism* of our times—a fact which I must now go on to establish in regard to the three remaining limitations.

152. The second limitation was the inability of the human mind to comprehend the Absolute Infinite (Chap. xv).

This also is not due to any limitation or restriction in the *form of the mind*, but only to the impossibility of the Absolute Infinite being fully presented to our mental vision—in other words, being perceived in His entirety by a finite reality like ourselves.

153. Our mind, in virtue of the form of *truth* with which it is endowed, is able to perceive and know all real beings whatever that are presented to it. But how

(1) It seems that Kant took the word *form* in a material sense, such as we attach to the shape of bodies. I take it in the sense in which it was taken by the ancient philosophers, who by *form* understood a perfecting principle. Moreover, this perfecting principle, in the present case, is *ideal being*, which informs our soul. Those critics, therefore, who charged me with having taken as the basis of my system one of the Kantian forms, have not understood that the form of which I speak differs essentially from all the Kantian forms, as *object* differs both from *subject* and from *extra-subject*.

are these beings presented to it? What is the place in which they are, if I may so say, located so as to be visible? Or, if I may use another metaphor, on what retina are they depicted? This is the point which has never, so far as I am aware, been properly observed by any one; and yet it is a point both extremely important and not so very difficult to ascertain. I shall be brief:—

That beings cannot be presented to the mind save in the soul, of which the mind is a faculty, is what has been more or less clearly known and said by all. But what I believe has never been properly grasped is the distinction between that part of the soul which receives real beings into itself and presents them to the mind, and the part which understands them. The limitation is not, in this second part, in the mind considered purely as mind, as intelligence, but it is in the first part, that into which real beings enter, so to speak, with their reality, and in which the substance of the soul chiefly consists. This part, then, this substance communicates with real beings by receiving their action into itself, in a word, the soul itself, sensitive by essence, (1) is necessarily limited. Hence the reality of other beings cannot be communicated to it beyond the extent allowed by the measure of its own reality. Thus it comes to pass that the human soul can never fully comprehend the Absolute Infinite, God. It may indeed be filled with the Divine Nature, poured into it as into a vessel, but it can never receive the whole of this Nature into itself. That is to say, it is

(1) According to the Author, the essence of the soul consists in a *substantial feeling*. See *Anthropology* ("L'Antropologia") Book II.; also the *Psychology*, 96–106.—*Tr.*

impossible for the Divine Nature to be presented to, or to be perceived by, the human mind in Its totality.

The reason, then, why we cannot know God perfectly, is not because our mind has a form that is limited; but it is because its form, though unlimited in itself, is found in a limited nature, and therefore a nature in which the Absolute Infinite cannot be contained, nor, consequently, be wholly presented to it for contemplation.

154. Neither can any doubt arise as to the truth of those things which our mind comes to see in the manner we have stated, from either the third or the fourth limitation (chap. xvi and xvii).

These limitations simply indicate the difficulty which the mind has to contend with when seeking to catch sight of things. The fact of these being placed where they can be seen does not depend on our will. We do not always know in what direction to look for a certain object on which we both wish and are able to fix our mental gaze. To have things brought within sight is sometimes very difficult, sometimes impossible; and we cannot help it. It is impossible when the thing we should like to find out does not fall under our perception, or is not connected in some way with truths of which we are already cognizant. Sometimes it has this connexion, and then we succeed, with more or less difficulty, in gaining a more or less perfect knowledge of it. When we seek to discover in nature some law which is yet hidden from us, in what does our whole skill consist but in so conducting our inquiry that the truth we are in search of may be brought within the range of our mental perspective? This is done, either through a reasoning whereby we join that truth

with others that are already known to us, or through some external aid which, without labour on our part, presents the said truth directly to our mind.

The difficulty to be encountered when, in order to find out a truth which we want to know, (1) we are obliged to have recourse to reasoning, is what forms the subject of the third limitation; and the necessity under which we are of depending on the free-will of a being external to us for the direct presentation to our mind of a certain class of truths, is what forms the subject of the fourth.

155. To conclude, therefore: None of the four limitations assigned above has anything whatever to do with the disheartening state of doubt to which the *sceptic* is necessarily doomed; none deprives our mind of its supreme and most precious privilege of knowing the truth. They simply point out under what conditions and in what measure it is possible for us to know it. Those conditions, however, are such as to make us plainly see what a small thing our mind is in its marvellous greatness; for they irresistibly prove that for all the knowledge which we may acquire, we are absolutely dependent on that Great Being on Whom the subsistence of all things depends.

(1) This knowledge is gained by establishing an equation between the truth to be found out and some other truth already known to us.

CHAPTER XXX.

THEODICY DESTROYED BY MODERN PHILOSOPHY.

156. Having now seen the difference between the theory on the limitations of human reason as expounded above, and that of the most celebrated modern schools, we may proceed to consider the different consequences of these theories as bearing on the way in which we ought to meet the difficulties which our mind encounters in the dealings of Divine Providence.

First of all, we must set aside the school of Locke; because this school, in deriving metaphysical truths from sensible experience, follows no constant law, but with the imagination and in an arbitrary manner deduces whatever it pleases.

157. As to Hume, it is easy to see what opinion he would be likely to form on this subject by following up the principles he had embraced. We have that opinion expressed very clearly in the Essay which he entitled, *On Particular Providence and a Future State.* Having started with the resolve to adhere strictly to Locke's principle that all our knowledge comes from the senses, and that there is no principle, no rule of judgment innate in our mind, he, naturally enough, felt bound to affirm that those which mankind at large considers as general principles are not such in reality; for most certainly they do not come from sensible experience. At least, their truth was open to grave doubts; so that in fact it would be more reasonable to say that they

were mere prejudices, delusive notions, which had insinuated themselves into the minds of the multitude through the force of habit and the association of ideas. This would, of course, involve in doubt the existence of *causes*, since no cause, as such, ever falls under the perception of our senses. Above all, it would involve in doubt the existence of the Final Cause of the universe, which could not be reached by the corporeal senses, not only in Its relation of cause, but also on account of Its being dependent on the existence of an unseen wisdom, and likewise on account of the pre-eminent spirituality of Its nature. With philosophic violence, therefore, he confined his mind within the mechanical course of nature alone, this being the only thing to which the senses could witness, and declared that human reason had no right to admit any but natural causes, or, to speak more accurately, *facts* which we witness in nature, and of which reason is not authorized to affirm anything further than that they follow one after the other. Moreover, having observed these facts of nature singly, and having found that they are all finite, he maintained that, even if the principle of causation were conceded, one could not legitimately infer from them the necessity of an *Infinite* Cause.

In drawing this conclusion he forgot to consider, that even if there were no need of an Infinite Cause for explaining the changes which take place in things that already exist, this need was manifest when there is question of explaining how these things began to exist; how they are preserved in existence; why they exist rather than others; how it is that they are connected with one another, and all tend incessantly,

whether man wills or not, to a grand unity. Of all this, neither the reason nor the cause is to be found in them.

158. To this sophism of Hume, Kant also fell a victim; and not to this alone. The destruction of the consoling doctrines regarding Divine Providence was to issue forth from the very vitals of the philosophy he had imagined (143). This most unhappy application of his *Transcendental Philosophy* was made by himself in his Essay *On the Vanity of all Philosophical Attempts in Theodicy*, as also in that which he entitled, *A Philosophical Sketch of the Way to Eternal Life*, and incidentally in many places of his other writings.

159. In truth, having fully committed himself to the principle that it is wholly beyond our power to know whether any being external to us exists, because (to use his material mode of speaking) our mind cannot go outside itself, and hence can only see phenomena or apparitions of things delineated within itself; and having, moreover, declared that this impossibility applied with all the greater force to the case of a Being of Whom experience told us nothing whatever; he saw no alternative but to conclude, that the belief in an all-governing Providence had no foundation in objective truth, and that to say that there is an Author of the universe was nothing but an arbitrary affirmation of presumptuous reason.

He had not, however, like Hume, discarded the principle of causation, that is to say, he had retained the appearance of it. He had rendered it subjective and deprived it of all the fecundity of its consequences in such a manner, that it remained incapable of proving the existence of any cause that was not itself sub-

jective and purely apparent. Hence it is that, according to his transcendental principles, the contemplation of visible things leads to nothing beyond a vague admission of a *cause of the world:* I say *vague*, because it says nothing as to whether this cause acts by a necessity of nature, or freely; whether it be connected and confounded with visible things, or distinct from them; whether, finally, it have a true or only apparent existence. That which is material or mechanical is apparent to the senses; but that which is moral and free is not. Accordingly, this philosopher of appearances denies point-blank the possibility of our mind ever passing from the mechanical course of nature to infer its moral ends which imply a governing mind. To make up as it were by an array of fine words for what he in reality takes away from the truth, he distinguishes two Theologies, the one *Natural* and the other *Transcendental.* The first, he says, is that which borrows from our soul the concept of a Supreme Intelligence which it supposes to exist, and which it calls God; but this is merely a postulate, or a supposition of reason, not an absolute demonstration. The second, on the contrary, admits a First *Cause*, but does so only in name, this cause being in point of fact a mere *ens rationis*, a mere concept of the Original Being, of the Being of beings, a concept in no way implying the actual existence of that being outside ourselves. Our reason, being inclosed within the infrangible barriers of its own concepts or ideas, cannot possibly go beyond them, and it would go beyond them if it could argue from them the existence of an external being. Hence, in his *Critique of Pure Reason* he devotes a whole section to making out what he considers a complete

demonstration of the utter impossibility of any system of Natural Theology, as of a thing altogether transcending the limits of the human understanding. Those who agree with him he would call by the name of *Deists*, reserving the name of *Theists* for those who believe in a Natural Theology. Thus we have here a clean denial of the validity of every proof which human reason could produce of God's existence; and it would therefore be much more correct to call this, not a *deistic*, but an *atheistic* system. But let us hear Kant himself:—

"Whereas by the concept of God" (see how he tries to evade the charge of atheism) "we are not accustomed to understand any eternal and blindly active nature as the first root of things, but a Supreme Being Whose intelligence and freedom is necessary to constitute the Author of all; and whereas also this is the only concept that interests us; so someone, feeling inclined to be severe, might allege against the Deist" (the transcendental philosopher) "that he does not believe in God at all, but contents himself with the mere assertion of an original being and of a first cause. Nevertheless, it not being just to accuse anyone of intending to impugn a certain thing, simply because he does not attempt to maintain it, so it will be more conformable to equity and moderation to say, that the *Deist* believes in a God, while the *Theist* believes in a living God, Supreme Intelligence."

160. Thanks be to this living God, that the founder of the Critical Philosophy, although pledged by the principles of his system to deny the possibility of any truly valid demonstration of the Divine Existence, nevertheless shows unmistakable signs of being keenly

sensible of the opprobrious stain cast on man's character by the open profession of *atheism*, and seeks therefore with a kind of nervous anxiety to clear himself of the foul blot as well as he may. Indeed, this is what happens with many of those who by vain reasonings would do away with Religion. It is conscience that rebels within them. It is nature that protests against the impious attempt, this nature which, even when depraved, is still the work of God, and by a recondite sentiment incessantly admonishes man of the wanderings of his erring reason, and seeks to bring him back to his First Cause, the fount of Truth and Goodness. In fact, this anxiety which the transcendental theologian exhibits for being called a *deist* rather than a *theist* would seem a miserable puerility. What is the use of such a distinction, when he denies the possibility of proving that there exists a living God, a Supreme and Free Intelligence; and when, in order to find something to which he may give the name of God, he is compelled to have recourse to an abstraction, by imagining a certain first root of things, active, but not distinct from the things themselves, such, therefore, that it always remains uncertain whether it acts intelligently, or mechanically as matter does? What is this but playing with words to deceive the unwary, who, hearing that a God is admitted, are easily satisfied without any further enquiries; whereas if they only reflected on the meaning of the word *God*, they would at once see that it is cunningly employed by the transcendental philosopher to signify quite a different thing from what all the world understands by it? The unwary do not see the snare thus laid for them; they take words at their

current value, and unsuspectingly imbibe the hidden poison.

It must, however, be confessed that Kant himself felt the frivolousness of so lame an expedient, of so insufficient a shelter behind a name. Hence to escape being thought an *atheist*, he sought to add a second excuse, no less puerile than the first. It was, that the transcendental philosopher does not impugn the existence of God, but merely declares human reason incapable of demonstrating it. Did he not know, then, that, by the most elementary rules of logic, we are forbidden to concede the existence of that which is not proven, because this would be a gratuitous, and therefore a foolish concession? In his Essay on *Theodicy* also he defends himself in the same frivolous way, that is, by alleging that he does not impugn Providence by positive arguments, but only by maintaining that human reason has no means of proving that there is a Providence. What does the word *atheism* mean but the non-admission of God's existence? Whether, therefore, that existence is not admitted on the allegation that it is impossible to prove it, or on the allegation that such admission is an absurdity, I do not see how the transcendental philosophy can honestly consider itself undeserving of the opprobrious title of *atheistic*.

161. It is true that Kant, after depriving the *theoretical reason* of the power of demonstrating God's existence, has recourse to the *practical reason* in order to admit it. But is not this a new subterfuge? The very denomination of *practical reason* is altogether incorrect. Are there perchance two reasons in man?

Reason is but one; the only difference is in the objects submitted to it.(1)

Kant showed that he was well aware of this when he denied to the practical reason all power of *demonstration*, and attributed to it only the power of making suppositions, or, to use his own expression, of *admitting postulates*. He fixes very clearly the difference between these two functions when he defines the *theoretic knowledge* as that by which we know what *is*, and the *practical knowledge* as that by which we represent to ourselves what *ought to be*. According to this, then, the practical knowledge does not tell us that there really is a God, but it only tells us that there ought to be one. It is a truth of convenience, a desire of nature, not an absolute truth. If this philosopher, therefore, gives the name of *reason* to that sentiment which teaches and commands us to be virtuous, this is merely that he may, by means of so specious a title, enhance its dignity. By this false, or at least inaccurate denomination, after having perhaps deceived himself, he deceives his readers also by giving them the impression that in his system God is admitted pursuant to a verdict of reason, whereas He is admitted purely by a longing of nature, that longing which causes us all to wish that virtue be conjoined with happiness; which indeed is all that his *practical reason* ultimately comes to. It is true that Kant distinguishes among his *postulates* those which are supposed arbitrarily, and which he terms *hypotheses*, from

(1) I also have been accused of admitting two reasoning faculties in man. This is a great misconception of my meaning. As I have abundantly explained elsewhere, by *practical reason* I simply understand the faculty of *reflection* in so far as it is influenced by the activity of the will, and thus becomes a principle of action.

those which are necessary as a *condition* of some *conditional* already known to us through the *theoretical reason*, and which he says are admitted as *theses;* and it is likewise true that he declares the existence of God to be a postulate admitted as a thesis. But this again amounts to nothing; for the thesis to which he refers always remains undemonstrated. Indeed, this seems to me only another attempt at parrying the accusation of Atheism. To remove the bad impression likely to be produced in his readers by seeing that he considered God merely as a kind of postulate, he added to the word *postulate* the greatest authority he could.

162. On the other hand, how worthless does this proof of God's existence appear, when we consider in their mutual connexion the doctrines enunciated by Kant on each of his two reasons, the theoretical and the practical! So far as the theoretical reason is concerned, he admits that our spirit might for all we know be the centre of the universe, and the universe itself be all made up of appearances issuing forth from our very nature.(1) Consistently with this admission, he finds in the practical reason the origin of the aim which we should propose to ourselves in all our actions. In the theoretical reason there is nothing to show that our spirit is not the Creator of nature; in the practical reason our spirit is the absolute maker and promulgator of the moral law. Both in producing the appearances of the things we know, and in intimating the ethical precepts, the spirit simply follows the laws of its own

(1) Fichte came next, and abolishing the *might be* of Kant, pronounced, not *critically* but *dogmatically*, that the *Ego* (our spirit) *was* the producer of everything.

nature. It is necessitated by these laws to act in this way, even as a mirror is necessitated to reflect the images according to its form. Consequently, it is impossible for us to prove that the legislation which irresistibly commands us to be virtuous is wise, except in appearance; we can only prove that it is necessary, but of a subjective necessity. Its authority is just what the authority of our nature may be; nothing more. We are subject to it for the sole reason that we have no power to throw off its dominion.

Now let us see how he proceeds from this to shew that we are necessitated to admit the existence of a God, without having any proof of it whatever—in other words, how we are necessitated by the laws of our spirit to be foolish, since it is foolishness to admit what we cannot prove:—

The laws of our spirit, he says, besides commanding us to be virtuous, impel us also to long for happiness. These two tendencies, to virtue and to happiness, do not always accord in this life, that is to say, it is not always the case that the virtuous are happy. We must, therefore, suppose another life, and in it a just retributor to bring them into harmony. Such is the Kantian argument in favour of God's existence, an argument which ultimately resolves itself into the affirmation that such an existence is a thing advantageous to mankind, inasmuch as this God will, in the future life, reward the virtuous who have obeyed the noblest command of their nature even by resisting the less noble inclination that was leading them to an apparent happiness, and will punish the wicked who have done the contrary.

163. Certainly, this would be a most valid argument,

if Kant had not previously divested it of all its force: I mean if there were in his system any means of proving that those two tendencies of human nature must really be brought into accord. This, however, is the major of a syllogism which remains wholly without proof. For how can he prove it? Not having admitted beforehand that man's nature has been constituted with wisdom, he may indeed say that it seems to us repugnant that the tendencies in question should not ultimately be made to harmonize; but then his fatal theory compels him to grant that the fittingness of this harmony is only apparent, and that the necessity of its ever being actually realized can in no way be proved. In fact, to be justified in affirming that what appears to us fitting must at some time take place, we should, according to Kant, have to transcend all the confines of the human mind. It follows, then, that between the *practical reason* and the *theoretical* there is just this connexion, that the inductions as well as the postulates of the former are declared by the latter to be gratuitous.

From so drear a philosophy we may at least gather one good thing, I mean its author's own precious confession, that the existence of God is what fills up the void of human nature, namely, what this nature feels to be a necessity for it, and what therefore it incessantly and irresistibly longs after. This confession is the greatest encomium of those philosophies which teach that this existence can be demonstrated as an absolute certainty, whilst at the same time it is a most withering critique of the Critical Philosophy. How can any one embrace a system which maintains the impossibility of proving what it is absolutely

necessary for him to admit? If human nature has, according to Kant, an invincible repugnance to denying God, if this repugnance forces us to admit Him, will not this same repugnance force us to reject the Kantian system which would have us believe that no really valid proof can be given of the Divine existence? What is philosophy worth, if it deprives me of all good? And if such a philosophy could be true, would not error itself be preferable to it? The moral proof, therefore, by which Kant pretends to demonstrate God's existence, either proves nothing, or if it proves anything, it proves, together with God's existence, the falsehood and absurdity of the Kantian system.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MORAL DISPOSITIONS REQUISITE FOR FITTING OUR MIND TO OVERCOME THE DIFFICULTIES IT ENCOUNTERS IN THE DEALINGS OF PROVIDENCE.

164. On the other hand, if I am not greatly mistaken, the theory which I have endeavoured to set forth in these pages, while consonant with the teaching of Holy Scripture, offers us a broad and pleasant way to the attainment of tranquillity of mind and contentment of heart in regard to the supreme dispositions of Providence.

165. I have distinguished two classes of arguments, both equally fit to meet the objections that are raised by our infirm reason. The first class is that of *general arguments*, the second that of *particular arguments*. The general arguments, being very plain and readily understood, are suited to all men; the particular arguments are not suited to all, because their use often demands abilities above the common.

The general arguments dispose of many difficulties together by a single answer; the particular arguments reply to single difficulties.

Among the first, some are more general, and some less. The most general of all is that by which all difficulties whatever, that present themselves to our weak reason, are summarily cut short by the knowledge we have that there exists a God infinitely Good, Wise,

and Mighty. Revelation is simply a means whereby we obtain this knowledge in greater abundance; and Faith is simply the firm belief we yield to the assurances of this God, Who speaks to us from behind the mysterious veil which now hides Him from us, but which will be removed when we shall be freed from the material robes that wrap us while we remain here below. Revelation, therefore, is not anything contrary to reason, because that cannot be contrary to reason which serves to enlighten and instruct it in the highest truths, even as there is nothing contrary to reason in the presence of bodies, which is the means through which the mind comes to know them, or than there is in the words of a teacher who imparts learning to his pupils. What could be more absurd than to represent as contrary to human reason those means by which it is aided, instructed, and perfected? Take away these means, and human reason will remain buried in darkness, profoundly debased, and as it were annihilated.

166. Nevertheless, even with our reason stimulated and enlightened by Revelation, we cannot in this life know or see the *Essence* of the Divine Nature. Hence we always remain under the happy necessity of humbly, though rationally, yielding to God the homage of this reason, by believing that He Whom we know to exist, exists in the most befitting mode, though unknown to us. Patiently to resign ourselves to this our ignorance until the time when it shall be done away with, to acknowledge it, to confess it, to suffer it without disquietude, such is the reasonable homage we have to yield to the Creator, a homage most pleasing to Him. It is a just homage, and yet it is galling to those

who will not take pains to reflect, or who are vain of their knowledge of sensible things. But it is precisely in this justice, in this humiliation of human pride that the merit of Faith consists, that Faith, in virtue of which we stand unalterably fixed in the belief of God's existence, although we are ignorant of the mode of it. Hence the slave of pride—a vice always essentially opposed to justice—is the only man who deliberately takes to the road of unbelief. He cannot bear to be told either of the ignorance of his present condition or of the knowledge which Revelation offers him. Revelation is to him an object of horror, and he turns away from it as from some terrible spectre. He will not see himself as he is. Rather than confess that he does not understand the way in which the Supreme Being exists, he denies His existence, and seeks to excuse his denial by alleging that the arguments which are brought forward to prove that existence are insufficient. Or else he rushes to the contrary extreme, by pretending that he sees God by a natural intuition. Humility, on the other hand, this generous virtue, this rational submission of the whole man, but especially of his reason, to Him Whom Holy Scripture calls "The only Wise," humility, which recognizes and confesses the limits that have been fixed to the human mind, prepares the way for Faith, and, through Faith, leads man direct to truth; while pride darkens his mind and is a prolific source of errors. But no matter how absurd may be the errors in which the proud man becomes inextricably involved, he feels quite satisfied so long as he can flatter himself with a high opinion of his own worth, and thus hide from himself his weaknesses and imperfections. To arrive at this, he denies, or, in the words of

St. Jude the Apostle, "blasphemeth the things he knoweth not;"(1) and, that he may the more effectually succeed in putting out of his thoughts that Great Object, to the knowledge of Whose nature he cannot attain, whilst his ignorance of it he is ashamed to confess, he goes to the length of simulating and counterfeiting humility itself, by extenuating excessively the capabilities of reason. But it is easy to see that this is nothing but a vain show of virtue, devoid of all substance, because devoid of truth. Thus no one who possesses any degree of discernment can be imposed upon by that false philosophic modesty which affects to make it so great a point to insist on the Divine incomprehensibility, or else, by subtle fallacies, seeks to do away with the possibility of our knowing by means of reason the real existence of beings outside us.

167. To recapitulate, then: All men may, if they will, tranquillize themselves in regard to the dispositions of Divine Providence; because all have ready at hand intelligible reasons, more or less general, the consideration of which may, and indeed must, completely allay any trouble they may be tempted to feel in consequence of the turn taken by events. The more general these reasons are, the larger is the number of persons who can avail themselves of them;

(1) "But these men blaspheme whatever things they know not" (spiritual things), "and what things soever they naturally know" (sensible things) "like dumb beasts, in these they are corrupted (*in his corrumpuntur*)." —Jude, i. 10.—The Holy Scriptures, which, speaking in God's name, intimate to us the duty of submitting to Faith, are also excellent helps to our reason, by communicating to us the most splendid and most direct arguments calculated to make us understand more and more the sublime ways of the Almighty in His government of the universe.

and the more particular they are, the more do they require of intellective force and of study, owing to their difficulty and multiplicity; since questions, by being particularized, are necessarily multiplied. But whether these reasons be general or particular, they are in themselves equally valid and cogent.

Nevertheless, the general reasons, although more clear, require a greater virtue and *strength of character* in order to keep man steady in all difficult encounters, by a continual application of them (29, 30). The particular reasons, on the other hand, have this advantage, that, when thoroughly understood, they succour human weakness, because, being nearer to the events, they are easier of application, and either by sensible proofs or by motives which accord with the way in which the human mind is accustomed to proceed, help to calm all disquiet.

A general reason is that of the Divine *authority;* and it suffices, by itself alone, to dispel all difficulties without exception. To be content with this reason is what I have called the method of FAITH, by following which the believer is never disturbed in mind, no matter how unexpected, painful, or incomprehensible to him an event may be. On the contrary, the investigation of the reasons less general than this, down to the most particular, I have called the method of INTELLIGENCE, which, unlike the method of Faith, cannot be followed with equal profit by all. Faith, therefore, rests on a first reason, and the way of Faith cannot be trodden without intelligence; so also the way of intelligence must not, indeed cannot, freely be trodden without Faith. Intelligence thus assisted by Faith, should be the guide of all those who love

tranquilly to fix their gaze on the traces of the wisdom that everywhere shines forth. Fully assured by the first and most general reason that investigation can only lead to a prosperous issue, these persons eagerly pursue their way, not so much that they may justify Divine Providence, as that they may understand and admire more and more its marvellous workings.

168. Along this royal road, those advance most who are most virtuously disposed. It is a great error to suppose that the Holy Scriptures, as the enemies of truth would have us believe, encourage cowardice and intellectual sloth. On the contrary, they continually incite us to vigilance and to zeal in a keen search after knowledge. But they do not, on this account, advise us to reject the most excellent of the means we have for becoming enlightened, namely Revelation, and to restrict ourselves to the less valid means, namely the contemplation of visible nature. The Revelation contained in them, and the Faith they inculcate, are indicated to us as the most solid basis of learning, and the beginning of all wisdom. "You know," says Moses to the people of Israel, "that I have taught you statutes and justices, as the Lord my God hath commanded me: so shall you do them in the land which you shall possess. And you shall observe and fulfil them in practice. For this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of nations, that hearing all these precepts, they may say: Behold a wise and understanding people, a great nation. Neither is there any other nation so great that has gods so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions." (1)

But if man should have the audacity to dispute with

(1) Deuter. iv. 4–7.

God, as if God were one of his equals, and malignantly carp at the Divine dispositions, what wonder that God should abandon him to the illusions of his own rashness and let him be entangled and held fast in his own evil thoughts? Hence the Book of Wisdom, which is in reality a treatise on the high and provident dispositions of the Almighty, begins with the precepts we must observe, if we wish to find ourselves in a proper condition for gaining a true insight into those sublime designs. First of all, it says, we must "love justice;" then we must be good and gentle of heart, so that we may incline "to think of the Lord in goodness," namely, as of that Being the mere idea of Whom implies all love; then we must seek this Lord "in simplicity of heart," namely, without being misled by any interested views, or any of those passions which excite and blind us. All voices of self-love must be repressed, so as to allow of truth being sought with directness and candour. To investigate Divine things with a heart preoccupied by distorted affections, is to tempt God; and "God is found only by those who tempt Him not, and He showeth Himself to those who have Faith in Him. For perverse thoughts separate from God," whilst, on the other hand, "steady virtue reproveth the universe," that is to say, keeps in the way of truth even those who would not otherwise have much ability to tread it. Again, "Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul," that is, into a soul cavillously bent on finding evil in others; neither will it "dwell in a body subject to sins," where, consequently, the mind is continually agitated and carried away by the winds of the passions. Finally, the Holy Spirit requires us to beware of all duplicity, both in

the purposes we aim at, and in the kind of knowledge we seek after; for He "will flee from the deceitful, and will withdraw Himself from thoughts that are without understanding." If a soul into which He has once entered should unfortunately fall away from virtue, He will surely desert it and leave it a prey to remorse: "He shall not abide when iniquity cometh in." (1)

Such, then, are the qualities which dispose us for successfully investigating the Divine secrets; because the mind, in its steps, is moved by the will and guided by the affections. Well, therefore, might the holy King David sing to God: "Much peace have they that love Thy law, and to them there is no stumbling-block." (2)

(1) Wis. ch. 1. (2) Ps. cxviii. 165.

ON

DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

BOOK II.

Φυσικός

ON THE LAWS ACCORDING TO WHICH TEMPORAL GOOD AND EVIL ARE DISTRIBUTED.

Forsitan vestigia Dei comprehendes?

—*Job*, xi., 7.

ON
DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK: TO SET FORTH THE SPECIAL REASONS WHICH VINDICATE DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN THE PERMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION OF TEMPORAL EVIL.

169. In the preceding book I treated, as far as was necessary for my purpose, of the confines which have been set to the human mind and to the knowledge attainable by it. To attempt to pass beyond these confines would be an absurd temerity, an attempt to do what is impossible. Nor, in truth, has man any need of passing beyond them in order to satisfy the legitimate demands of his mind and of his heart; because Reason and Faith, in mutual accord, are ever ready to give him all the aid he requires for clearing away any difficulties which may occur to him concerning the origin of evil, and the wisdom and goodness of that Providence which permits evil and allows it, according to certain laws, to

be mixed up with the good so plentifully bestowed upon mankind.

Nay, all those difficulties absolutely fall to the ground the moment they are confronted with certain most powerful reasons of general application, such, for example, as that of the certainty of the existence of a Supreme Being. These reasons were likewise touched upon in the preceding book.

In this book I must come down more to particulars, by opposing to the said difficulties reasons of a more special kind, directed to combat them in detail, as a comfort to the weakness of the human mind, and a salutary and agreeable nourishment to hearts well and piously disposed.

170. It is not, however, my intention to treat of all the questions which the consideration of the ills that continually afflict humanity very readily suggests, and which may be reduced to those two celebrated questions which have in all times been discussed by the most acute thinkers, viz.:—

1st. "How can free-will in man, the fount of moral good, be reconciled with the fixed course of events, namely, with the prevision and predestination of God, and His action on creatures?"—Leibnitz calls this question one of the two labyrinths of the human mind. (1)

2nd. "How can temporal evil, and its distribution among men, as we actually see it taking place, be reconciled with the Divine attributes, namely, with the Divine Sanctity, Justice, Goodness, Wisdom and Power?"

(1) The other labyrinth of the human mind, according to Leibnitz, is the question of the Mathematical Infinite. See the preface to his *Theodicy*.

171. Now, I shall confine myself to the second of these two most important questions. Accordingly, supposing the first to be already settled, I shall assume as postulates the three following propositions:—1st, Man is a free agent; 2nd, All things are pre-ordained by God from eternity; 3rd, These two propositions involve no contradiction, there being a right way of reconciling them, whatever that way may be.

This separation of the two questions seems to me all the more allowable inasmuch as the second is not so necessarily connected with the first, but that it may be understood without it, and be treated, as many writers have treated it, by itself alone.

172. Nevertheless my subject, even thus restricted, affords inexhaustible matter. Among the multitude of writers who have discussed it, St. Augustine, Leibnitz, Archbishop King, and Count De Maistre, stand in the foremost rank; so that the difficulty for those who, like myself, propose now-a-days to write a vindication of Divine Providence—and for this end *to give a short exposition of the wise and excellent laws according to which temporal good and temporal evil are allotted by God to men*—lies in the abundance of materials to choose from, rather than in their scarcity.

173. Although I were unable to add anything to what has been said by others, I should not consider it a loss of time to write upon so noble a theme. (1) For it seems to me an act of humanity toward our suffering

(1) The Abbé Vrindts, on occasion of the late Jubilee, published in France a work on the same subject (*Du Mal*, Paris, Chez Méquignon-Havard. 1826). This proves that the need of treating these questions is felt in our time. Certain questions, although of ancient date, have always a new interest, because the human race itself is ever new, has ever the same nature, and the same questions to put to itself.

fellow-beings even only to recall to their memories those reasons, so noble, so profound, and so true, by which religious wisdom can shed immortal joys over the most poignant griefs of frail mortality.

174. The question, "How temporal evil can be reconciled with the Divine attributes," is not quite so simple as it appears to be. It is composed of two parts, which for clearness' sake I must distinguish. The first regards the *origin of temporal evil*, the second regards its *distribution*. These parts have a close mutual relation, and I shall therefore treat of both; yet they are distinct, and I shall therefore treat first of the one and then of the other.

CHAPTER II.

QUESTION OF THE ORIGIN OF EVIL.—QUESTION OF THE NATURE OF EVIL.—UTILITY OF THESE QUESTIONS.

175. When we see virtuous men suffer, we ought to consider whether they suffer because they are virtuous, or because they are human beings. We see that they suffer; but can we affirm that virtue is the cause of their sufferings? If we cannot prove this, we are not authorized to say that virtue is afflicted and ill-used. We ought rather to say that what suffers is human nature, and that those individuals suffer, not because of their virtue, but because they are men.

But why does human nature suffer? Being the work of an infinitely perfect God, should it not be free from all sufferings whatever?

Here begins the question of the *origin* and of the *nature* of evil.

176. To inquire whence evil comes to human nature, and to inquire in what the nature of evil consists, are, again, two different questions. Nevertheless, they are closely connected, and sometimes merged into one. Hence they should be treated together; for in order to form a correct idea of the *nature* of a thing, it is almost always necessary to mount to the *source* from which it springs.

177. For the theist, the mere belief in the existence of the infinitely perfect Being is, as we have said, an

all-sufficient guarantee that the origin of evil can be no disparagement to the Divine perfections. In the knots which his reason is unable to unravel, he adores a Wisdom transcending his own; for all objections, even though apparently insoluble, entirely lose their force before such direct demonstration as is involved in the very idea of God.

Only the atheist, therefore, can be scandalized at the existence of evil on this earth, taking his ignorance as an argument for denying God. Now, although I do not intend to address myself to atheists, who are beings of uncertain existence, but to persons who believe in an Infinite Being endowed with all perfections, and particularly to Christians, nevertheless I shall not, as I have said, avail myself in this book of so general a principle for solving the objections against Divine Providence. Weak minds require some other kind of support. It is very difficult for most men, on the strength of the direct argument alone, to regard as null and void all objections, even the most plausible. Too much logical consistency would be required of them to be able to open their minds to the full light of such a demonstration, and to feel its force so strongly that none of the contrary allegations should in the least shake the firmness of their conviction.

178. Nevertheless, if even an atheist will carefully ponder on those special answers which will be brought forward in vindication of the Providence that has permitted evil to enter into the world (and many others could be added of a similar kind), he will not labour in vain. He will, I venture to affirm, come to see that the distribution of good and evil, far from proceeding by blind chance, exhibits unmistakable evidences of a

design so vast, so sublime, and so beneficent as to be of itself an irrefragable proof of a Supreme Providence, and of the presence of a Supreme Being directing it. I would merely ask him to take, provisionally, as a hypothesis, what the Christian Religion teaches on this subject; and I feel convinced that he would find in that hypothesis a beauty, a grandeur, a perfection which would render it difficult for him not to perceive that it stands far above all mere hypotheses, and hence that it is something more than an empty theory; that it is truth.

CHAPTER III.

THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL IS NO DEROGATION TO THE DIVINE PERFECTION, BECAUSE EVIL DOES NOT AFFECT GOD, BUT FINITE NATURES ONLY, AND ITS NATURE IS NOT POSITIVE.

179. The objections which suggest themselves to the mind against the Divine attributes as one inquires into the origin of evil, may be classified under three heads, viz.:

1st. Those which concern the *Perfection and Sanctity* of God;

2nd. Those which assail His *Justice;*

3rd. Those which assail His *Goodness.*

180. Now, if we suppose that the Divine Goodness has been vindicated, the attributes of Wisdom and of Power will have been equally defended. Given a demonstration that the evils existing in the world prove nothing against the unlimitedness of the Goodness of God, it follows that they prove nothing against the unlimitedness of His Wisdom and His Power. The reason is that an Infinite Goodness cannot be conceived except as accompanied by a Wisdom and a Power likewise Infinite. These are, so to speak, the two great arms of Goodness. It is by means of them that it diffuses its immeasurable benefits. Wisdom points out to Goodness what is the best to will; and Power renders this volition, this love of what is best, operative.

Let us, then, begin by discussing the objections which are raised against the Perfection and Sanctity of God.

181. The first is this: "How is the existence of any evil possible under a God infinitely holy and perfect?"—Those who make this objection are at a loss to understand how the Goodness of God can be reconciled with the evil which is found in the creatures of God. It seems to them as if the concept of a Being endowed with infinite perfection excluded the very possibility of evil. If that perfection is infinite, must it not fill with itself all things, all times, all spaces in the universe? Evil, therefore, not having any place to rest in, should be eliminated from nature. Thus argues human short-sightedness.

182. Reduced to its simplest form, this objection may be thus worded: "Since an infinitely perfect Being necessarily exists, evil is impossible."

183. There was a time when such an objection was most difficult to answer, before St. Augustine, in refuting the Manichean heresy of the "Two Principles," discovered and brought out into full light the nature of evil. To any one who then wished to meet it directly, the objection seemed impossible to solve.

184. It is true that even before St. Augustine, the heathen philosopher Epictetus had known that evil is not a nature, and had written this most beautiful sentence: "As we require no target for aiming amiss, so neither does the nature of evil exist in the world." (1) By these words he distinctly insinuated

(1) *Sicut aberrandi causâ meta non ponitur, sic nec natura mali in mundo existit. (See the Manuale.)*

that evil consists simply in the failure of an action to attain its own proper term. The missing of this term is the evil of the action, in the same way that the discharge of a bow is faulty when the arrow misses its mark. For the arrow to be shot straight, art and skill are necessary; none, to make it go astray.

Later on, St. Athanasius, in an oration against Idols, wrote: "Neither from God, nor in God, nor at the beginning, was there any evil; nor does there exist a substance of evil, but men, imagining and thinking the *privation of good*, began to form to themselves a notion of evil, and, by a fiction, affirmed those things to be which were not."(1) Thus did this Greek Father notice the existence of that faculty by which the human mind conceives the negation of things under a positive form, and from this faculty he most correctly derived the origin of the *corruption* of evil.

That evil is nothing but a privation, was seen also by St. Basil, as we may gather from his comparing it to death and to darkness, and then concluding: "We must not look upon evil as though it were a thing existing of itself, external to us, nor imagine that there is some natural principle of malice; but each one should acknowledge himself to be the author of his own perversity."(2)

Among the Latin Fathers, a similar thought was expressed by St. Jerome in his Commentaries on the Lamentations of Jeremias, where he says: "Evil is not, of its own nature, any of the things that subsist, and is not created by God."(3)

(1) *Oratio in Idola.*

(2) *Hexam.*, Homil. II., from which St. Ambrose drew a similar sentence, as may be seen in his *Hexam.*, L. I. c. 8. (3) Cap. III.

185. Nevertheless, this doctrine was not sufficiently discussed and cleared up until St. Augustine with his wonderfully keen intellect unfolded it under all its aspects, thus annihilating for ever the heresy of the "Two Principles."

He proved irrefragably that evil is not a subsistent and positive entity; that God, therefore, fills all things with His infinite perfection and holiness, without in any way entering, so to speak, into evil; and, as a consequence, that to explain how evil arises there is no need of having recourse to a first positive principle which produces it. (1)

St. Prosper expressed this doctrine of his master in the following verses:—

Per Verbum omnipotens Deus omnia condidit unus,
A quo natura est nulla creata mali:
Et quod non fecit dives sapientia Verbi,
Non habet in rerum conditione locum.
Nulla igitur vitiis substantia, nullaque vita est,
Quæ vegetet corpus, materiamque suam.
Sed cum libertas discedit ab ordine recto,
Nec servant proprium quæ bona sunt modulum,
In culpa et vitio est vagus in contraria motus,
Fitque malum veram deseruisse viam." (2)

(1). The principal places where St. Augustine treats of the nature of evil are: *Confess.* II. 20.—*Enchirid.* IX—XIII,—*De lib. Arbitr.* III. 5, VIII—XV.—*In Joan. Tract.* I., and in all the writings against the Manicheans.

(2). *Epigr.* 95:—

"By His almighty Word one God made all,
But made no evil nature, great or small.
Now, what from that wise Word doth not proceed,
May be a thing in name, yet not in deed.

This doctrine, after so much light thrown upon it by the Doctor of Grace, has been embraced by all the wise, and most useful consequences have been drawn from it.

186. Seeing, therefore, that evil is now generally known to be in reality *nothing but a privation of good*, (1)

> To think that vice and error may partake
> Of substance, growth, and life, were a mistake.
> But when free-will from its right order strays,
> Or when good things transgress by devious ways,
> Their lawless course brings guilt and sin in sooth;
> For evil is to leave the path of truth."

(1). The *Biblioteca Italiana*, however, in an article upon this little work (no. cxxxi) has thought fit to question the accuracy of the above definition of evil. It says: "The definition advocated by our Author might have pleased the ancient Peripatetics, inasmuch as it seems to imply a belief in the negative principle, which is very much the same as the principle of privation and of non-existence in which those philosophers believed; but it would hardly meet with the approval of the compilers of the *Encyclopédie* (See art. *Du Mal*), or of the illustrious Dr. King, whose work *On Evil* has been so much admired."

In reply I might observe, that the *Encyclopédie* does not seem to be a very fitting authority to appeal to in a matter of this kind; and that as regards the Peripatetics and the schoolmen, it were high time to cease despising what one is ignorant of. I might also observe, that the writer of the article here contradicts what he said in the preceding page, where he wanted to prove that I give too much importance to things which are already known, because I give the name of *Cosmic Law* to the principle that "The limitation of created things is the cause of all their imperfections." He does not perceive that this principle, known, as he says, to everybody, is in reality that very same principle which, according to him, is so much controverted. And yet the passage from Leibnitz, which I had put at the end of my essay, might have reminded him of the fact; for it distinctly states that *limitation* and the *negative* or *privative principle* are one and the same thing. Here is the passage: *Et huc redit Sancti Augustini sententia, quod causa mali non sit a Deo, sed a nihilo, hoc est, non a positivo, sed* A PRIVATIVO, *hoc est,* AB ILLA QUAM DIXIMUS LIMITATIONE CREATURARUM."

But what shall I say of the authority both of Dr. King and the *Encyclo-*

the objection of which we are speaking cannot be considered as of much weight. *Privation* is the effect, not of a positive, but of a negative cause. It arises either from defective formation, in consequence of which a being does not fully attain its nature, or else from weakness or slackness in the action of a being. Now it is plain that neither of these two defects can occur in God. For while, on the one hand, His nature is infinitely perfect, His action is, on the other, as perfective as His nature, nature and action being in Him necessarily one and the same thing. It follows that the cause of all evil lies only in creatures whose substance is always finite. As the act of existence is not essential to them, they may receive it in an imperfect degree; and likewise, their power and their second acts, being different from their existence, may be defective and fall short of the right mark.

187. It is not, then, in the essence of beings that evil must be sought, but in their natural constitution (*naturazione*), or in their action and passion—three things which for simplicity's sake

pédie, which the *Biblioteca* opposes to me? If these authorities had given utterance to the error which is now attributed to them, they would not deserve to be quoted. But in their defence it must be confessed that they have done no such thing, but the very contrary. The *Encyclopédie* begins its review of the work of the Archbishop of Dublin thus: "Voici l'idée générale du système de l'illustre Archevèque de Dublin. 1° Toutes les créatures sont nécessairement imparfaites, et toujours infiniment éloignées de la perfection de Dieu; si l'on admettait un principe négatif, tel que la privation des péripatéticiens, on pourrait dire que chaque être est composé d'existence et de non-existence; c'est un rien tant par rapport aux perfections qui lui manquent, qu' à l'égard de celles que les autres êtres possèdent: CE DÉFAUT OU COMME ON PEUT L'APPELER, CE MÉLANGE DE NON-ENTITÉ DANS LA CONSTITUTION DES ÊTRES CRÉÉS, EST LE PRINCIPE NÉCESSAIRE DE TOUS LES MAUX NATURELS, ET REND LE MAL MORAL POSSIBLE, COMME IL PARAÎTRA PAR LA SUITE," &c., &c.

I shall include under the general denomination of *action*. When, therefore, the action of contingent beings, not following its proper course, turns to a term which is at variance with the requirements of their essence, then there is evil in it. And here we must be careful to note well what that is which in the devious action in question properly deserves the name of evil. For it would be an error to suppose that the whole action itself is evil. The action, as *action*, is always a positive thing, whereas, evil, viz., the privation of good, is not a positive but a negative thing. Thus in every action which misses its right natural term, two elements must be distinguished, the one positive and the other negative. The first is the entity itself of the action; the second is the failure of the action to attain the end demanded by its nature. The first is good; the second is a privation of good, consequently an evil, a loss for the being in which it has occurred, and an irreparable loss. I say irreparable, in this sense, that the identical action, when once gone wrong, can no longer be rectified, as in the case of a seed which is destitute of productive power, or of a fruit which decays before reaching maturity.

CHAPTER IV.

GIVEN A FINITE NATURE, THE POSSIBILITY OF EVIL IS INEVITABLE; GOD HIMSELF COULD NOT PREVENT IT, BECAUSE HE CANNOT DO THE ABSURD.

Omnis creatura certis suæ naturæ circumscripta est limitibus.

St. Ambrose, *De Spir. S.*, I., VII

188. But here it will at once be objected: Granting the truth of what you have just said, how is it that God, Whose Power, Goodness and Wisdom are infinite, has not made creatures so perfect that they should never be at fault in their action?

189. To answer this difficulty, we must consider the nature of created things, and grasp well the fact that, since it would be impossible for God to create another God, the universe and all things therein contained must necessarily be limited.

LIMITATION ENTERS INTO THE NATURE OF ALL THINGS, GOD ONLY EXCEPTED.

This is a fundamental law of creation, and it is also the key that opens to us the way to understand Divine Providence.

190. Now from the fact that all creatures, for the very reason that they are creatures, have a limited entity, it follows that they must also have a limited action, and therefore an action which is accidental and liable to fail. Let us see how this comes about in regard to each of the three great classes of things that

exist, viz., the material, the sensitive, and the intellective.

191. 1st. *Material things.* A body cannot extend its action beyond the place which it occupies; it cannot enter into the place occupied by another body; and if the two come violently into collision, they break into pieces. I shall not dwell longer on the consideration of this defectiveness in the action of corporeal natures; because this would lead me into a very difficult and very long discussion, in which I should first of all have to inquire whether these natures have any subjective perfection, or whether the whole of their perfection does not consist in being an object to the intellective nature that perceives them. (1)

192. 2nd. *Sensitive things:*—The sensitive nature has this natural limitation—that it is very susceptible to pleasure as well as to pain, and necessarily so. If we take away from sense this susceptibility, the very idea of feeling will vanish from before our mind. Such, then, being the nature of feeling, not even God, with all His attributes, could have prevented it from being, *per se*, liable to both agreeable and disagreeable perceptions; for without this liability, it would not have been the nature which it is. He could not, therefore, annul the *possibility* which this nature has of suffering, or, which comes to the same thing, could not prevent it being liable to defective action.

193. 3rd. But God, intending to form a much more excellent nature than the sensitive, made man, a

(1) On this important and interesting subject, see the Author's *Principles of Moral Science* ("Principii della Scienza Morale"), ch. ii., *Philosophy of Rights* ("Filosofia del Diritto"), Vol. I., p. 185, and *Theosophy* ("Teosofia"), Vol. II., p. 16.—*Tr.*

being naturally endowed with intelligence and with freedom to choose between good and evil. The merely sensitive nature was furnished with an instinct leading it invariably to seek what is pleasant and to shun what is painful; but an intelligent and free nature could not act by blind necessity. This, be it noted, belongs to its excellence; for it is an excellence to have dominion over one's own actions, to be able to choose this action or that according as one likes best. This privilege adds to the nature that possesses it the most noble quality of being the producer of its own perfection, and of entering, as it were, into partnership with the Creator in giving completion to itself. But in order that this nature might have such excellence, it was requisite that it should also have the power to do the contrary by failing in the work of its perfection. Consequently, even if God had so willed, He could not have created this excellent nature otherwise than as liable to defect.

Thus, the *possibility of physical and moral evil is inseparable from the nature of all things except God;* for the nature of all things that have been, or can be, created, necessitates in them some limitation; and this limitation subjects them to the possibility of evil —physical evil, if the nature is not moral, and moral evil, if the nature is moral. (1)

(1) Here we can see by what link *privation*, or evil properly so called, is connected with the natural *limitation* of creatures, to which some improperly give the name of metaphysical evil. The ideas conveyed by the three words *negation*, *limitation*, *privation*, although akin to, are different from, one another. 1st. *Negation* has a wider meaning than either *limitation* or *privation;* for it simply expresses the absence or non-existence of anything. 2nd. *Limitation* has a wider meaning than *privation*. It signifies the negation of an entity considered as part of another entity; and when this second

194. What is said of natures taken singly, applies also to natures taken complexly, *i.e.*, in combination.

Since, as a matter of fact, all natures are endowed with certain forces (I here use the word *force* to signify every aptitude of acting and being acted upon), it follows that when they come together, mutual action and reaction, opposition, union and division, must be the result. Hence each nature will be liable to be affected, beneficially or injuriously, by the others. Sensitive natures will be apt to benefit or hurt one another; and still more will intellective natures be apt to benefit or hurt, seeing that their activity is greater than that of the sensitive. The liability or aptitude of which I speak is a necessary consequence of these natures being all arranged, as it were, in the same place, and in such a manner as to be capable of approaching, or receding from, each other; in one word, of being ordered in the same universe. Since this mutual attraction and repulsion, this helping or hindering one another, is a consequence of their very essence, given the suitable relations and conditions, it is clear that God could not combine these natures into that whole of marvellous beauty which the universe presents to our eyes, without at the

entity is not necessary to the thing of which one speaks—nay, is excluded from its nature, the limitation is called *natural*. 3rd. *Privation* signifies a *limitation against nature*, as when a thing is wanting in what its nature demands; for example, when an act fails in reaching the term to which it is naturally ordained. If I think of a man who might exist, but does not exist, I think of a *negation*. If I think of an actual man who, although perfect in every respect as a human being, has in him nothing beyond what falls within the sphere of human nature as such, I think of a *limitation*. Lastly, if I think of a man who has had the misfortune to lose an arm, or is deficient in something which he could and should have in accordance with his nature, I think of a *privation*, and therefore an *evil* of that man.

same time leaving them subject to those mutual actions and reactions as well for good as for evil.

195. To sum up, then: Evil is only a deficiency; it is not a substance nor any positive quality of a substance. No positive cause is therefore required to produce it, no essentially evil principle to account for its existence. God, by filling all things with His goodness, does not render evil impossible. This deficiency called evil is merely the action of some limited nature in so far as it fails to attain its own proper term, and is therefore found in creatures only. Limitation, or liability to fail, is so connatural to creatures, that to think them existent without it would be an absurdity. If creatures were not limited, they would be infinite like the Creator, eternal like Him, independent like Him, self-existent like Him; in fact, they would be creatures without being created—a contradiction in terms. Therefore the *possibility* of the evils to which created things are subject is metaphysically necessary, so that not even God's omnipotence, supposing Him to will that they should exist, could do away with it.

Thus neither the *nature* of evil, nor its *possibility*, or, in other words, the limitation of natures, is anywise in contradiction with the Divine Sanctity and Perfection; the first, because it is a mere *privation;* the second, because it is *necessarily connatural* to all things that have been or could be created.

CHAPTER V.

THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL IS NOT OPPOSED TO THE PERFECTION AND SANCTITY OF GOD ANY MORE THAN ITS POSSIBILITY.

196. The *limitation of creatures*, which necessarily renders evil possible, is not itself evil. It remains, therefore, to explain how the passage from *limitation* to *privation*, or the existence of evil, is brought about. Certainly a thing cannot be called corrupted for the sole reason that it is limited. Although limited, it may be perfect of its kind, that is, entirely free from the evil which *might* befall it. If, then, the limitation of creatures does not necessarily involve the actual existence of evil in them, I ask: to what must we attribute their passing from being simply *limited* to being bad?

197. To answer this question, it is necessary to note that the *natural limitation* of creatures varies in character and quality according to the different natures of the creatures themselves.

Some of them are almost entirely *passive*, that is, devoid of any internal principle moving them to act of their own accord. Others, on the contrary, are in great part *active*, that is, endowed with an internal principle of their own, from which their actions spring.

198. Obviously the first cannot pass from the state of *limitation* to that of *corruption*, or evil, save by the

action or impulse of an external force. We see this in the motion of bodies. A body never begins to move by itself; its movements are always caused from without, being due to propulsion or else (if we are to say that attraction is a force) to attraction from other bodies.

199. With the others the case is different. For, while they possess, under certain conditions, an activity of their own, their limitation consists not merely in receiving the impulse to evil, but also to a certain extent in directly producing it. They have an *active liability* to evil, a liability depending on themselves. As it is they that act, so it is they that act amiss. If, therefore, the miscarrying of their action places them in a state of privation, the fault is their own, since, having a limited power of action, they choose to pass to that defective mode of action in which their corruption or evil lies.

200. In physical natures, then, which are passive, the principle in virtue of which they change from *limitation* to *privation* must be sought outside them; but in moral natures it must be sought within them.(1) Nay, it is in this very principle that their limitation chiefly consists; that is to say: *The limitation of moral natures lies in the power they have of choosing evil as well as good*, of performing actions which attain their own natural term, and so perfect the moral being, or actions which miss that term, and thus deprive such a

(1) I said at no. 197, that moral natures are *active in part*, and not in all respects. The reason is, that there is a certain degree of passivity belonging to them also, in consequence of which they can, besides producing evil in themselves, receive it also from without, as we see in the case of the transfusion of original sin.

being of the perfection it ought to have, and infect it with evil.

Let us apply this to human nature. This nature is essentially free to take either a right or a wrong course. This liberty is an excellent endowment inasmuch as it is the source of merit; but it has at the same time this limitation—that it can turn to evil, for the notion of merit necessarily implies that of the possibility of demerit If, then, we consider human nature as it is in itself, we find that it must be capable of passing, of its own accord, from being limited to being morally disordered. Now we know from the traditions of the human race that moral evil preceded physical evil, and that it was man himself who, abusing his free-will, rendered himself immoral, whereas he had been ordained by his Creator to the perfection of virtue.

Here we have plainly the origin of all evils.

201. In fact, *moral evil* having been thus introduced into the world, the appearance of physical evil is not difficult to explain. It was simply a natural consequence of that close and necessary relation which exists between the moral and the physical order—between physical and moral evil.

Nay, this relation is of so inviolable a nature, that it would have been against the Divine Perfection and Sanctity itself to let moral evil escape without a just retribution in the form of physical evil.

Physical evil, or sensible suffering, is the only possible way of avenging the Divine Sanctity which the offender has outraged, and attempted, though in vain, to destroy and annihilate. Punishment alone restores the order of justice violated by sin, inasmuch as it compels the unjust to render to the

Divine Greatness, by means of the penalty, that glory which he refused to give by a voluntary homage that would have deserved recompense.

202. The truth, therefore, is, that whether the evil which is found on this earth be considered *in its nature* or in its *possibility*, or, finally, in the way in which it passed from possibility to *actual existence*, nothing can be proved from it which is in the least degree derogatory to the Divine Sanctity and Perfection.

CHAPTER VI.

VINDICATION OF DIVINE JUSTICE AGAINST THE OBJECTION, THAT THE DESCENDANTS OUGHT NOT TO BE MADE TO SUFFER FOR THE SIN OF THEIR FIRST PARENTS.

203. Here, however, some one will be ready to say: "Why should the descendants be involved in the evils which fell upon their first parent in punishment of his sin? Does not this seem contrary to justice?" This objection we must now answer.

204. First of all, I think it necessary to observe that it is a very common thing for men to confound *justice* with *goodness*, and to assail the former with accusations which from their very nature could have no force whatever except as urged against the latter. How prone are people to claim rights which have no existence, or to complain of wrong where there has been no wrong at all! How extravagant are the pretensions of self-love! In its prejudiced eyes, it is a crime for you, not merely to do a hurtful thing, but also not to be lavish with what is your own. Let only your accustomed liberalities be diminished never so little—nay, let them only not be increased up to the measure of your client's greedy expectations, and lo! you will, in too many cases, have the cry of *injustice* raised against you; and this fancied injustice will be made the occasion of a thousand complaints, so that a very trifling accident will suffice to change into an object

of execration and hatred a benefactor towards whom no true gratitude had ever been felt.

205. If this behaviour is often shown to man, it is shown much oftener to God.

And yet what a difference, in the matter of justice, between man and the Almighty! A man may indeed wrongfully withhold from us that which is really ours, that to which we have acquired a positive right; and when this happens, we are entitled to complain of injustice. But is such a thing ever possible in the relation in which man stands to God? Can it ever be said with truth that God is a *debtor* to man?

This point must be well pondered; for if man cannot show a true title of *right*, that is to say, a title that renders him truly a creditor with God, and God a debtor to him, the very possibility of any objection against Divine *justice* becomes inconceivable, and the affirmation of it an absurdity. Now, the mere notion of what God is, and of what man is, when clearly understood, is quite enough to decide the point. What, then, is God? A being who gives all and receives nothing. What is man? A being who gives nothing and receives all. I ask, therefore: between two such beings can the question of reciprocal justice ever be raised? Can the second of these beings say to the first, from whom he has received all that he possesses, and to whom he has given nothing, and can give nothing: "Thou hast done me an injustice"? Merely to ask this question is to answer it.

206. It will be said, that although man cannot have a right before God, by virtue of his nature, he may nevertheless have it on the supposition that a promise has been given by God Himself. This is true; for

if the giving of a promise on the part of God is an act of goodness, when the promise has been given, it implies in man a right to expect its fulfilment. But this is exactly what is wanting in regard to the temporal good of which we are speaking. Has God, perchance, promised to His faithful servants that their merits shall be rewarded in the present life? Has He pledged His word to the effect that they shall be free from temporal calamities? Or rather, has He not prepared them beforehand to suffer these calamities with magnanimity? Has he not instructed them to look upon such things as a great means for purifying and increasing their virtue? Has He not shewn them by His own example that humiliation is the road to glory, and sacrifice the road to happiness?

207. It will be rejoined, that it is nevertheless repugnant to our natural feeling to concede that the Creator can inflict pain on innocent creatures: under a God Who loves truth, only the guilty must be miserable.

Granted: but we must make a distinction. Do you complain because God afflicts you positively by depriving you of what is yours, or because He afflicts you negatively by not bestowing on you what is His? If you consider well what men call *injustice*, you will find that no one is ever reproached with it who, although he refuses to part with his own, does not lay his hands on what belongs to others; who, although he is not given to deeds of beneficence, neither insults, nor injures, nor kills his fellowmen. Such a one may, if you will, be described as niggardly, but not as unjust. Now, as we are speaking here of *justice* and nothing else, let us apply to God that same notion of justice

which our conduct shews quite well that we have in our dealings with men, and then it will be easy to justify Him.

208. Are the evils which have passed from the first parent of the human race to his descendants, inflicted positively by God Himself? Did God perhaps, by His own act, take away from men anything belonging to their nature? True, He withdrew from the first man, in consequence of his sin, the supernatural gifts with which He had endowed him. But these do not in any way belong to human nature. Besides, it would be much more true to say that man himself iniquitously cast away the gift of grace, than to say that God withdrew it from him; for it was man, who, by his wilful transgression, placed himself in a state in which God's gracious union with him was rendered intrinsically impossible, since Essential Holiness cannot co-exist with sin.

209. So likewise the corruption which has remained in human nature is not due to a positive action of God, but to natural laws which were brought into play by man's sinful action. Sin deteriorates and enfeebles the human will. Hence the will of our first parent, after his transgression, found itself weaker than it was before, weaker, I mean, in two ways: first, by the total loss of *supernatural energy*, because that transgression divested man of all supernatural gifts; secondly, by a diminution, in great part, of the *natural energy*, because sin is also an offence against nature, and has therefore an injurious effect upon it. Thus the will of Adam remained deteriorated, not merely in comparison with its former high state, but also in comparison with its natural perfection; for there can be no doubt that human

nature, free from all sin, is morally stronger than when tainted with sin. Now, it must be remembered that man, when once fallen into a sinful state, is no longer able, by himself, to rise out of it so as to be restored to justification. Nor is God bound by any law of *justice* so to restore him, that is to say, to perform in his favour what would be an act of infinite power, indeed, an act (if we consider well its nature) equal to, nay greater than, creation itself. So far as mere justice was concerned, the Creator, besides abandoning His rebellious creature to itself, was bound to inflict on it a chastisement proportionate to the offence.

210. But even supposing that God, by a free act of infinite mercy, were moved to justify the sinner, it would not follow that the sinner's will must regain *all* the moral forces which it previously had. It would be enough for it to be set straight in its superior part, although the inferior part remained weak and with an evil bent. This, Faith tells us, was precisely the method of justification ordained by Jesus Christ.

211. But it will be rejoined: "What you say explains the condition of the first parents of mankind; but what about their descendants? Is it not unjust that they, who have had no share in the guilt, should share in the evils flowing from it?"

I repeat that there would be force in the objection if God Himself had, by a positive act, despoiled these descendants of *what was theirs*, or inflicted positive evil upon them. But in the first place, what had they before they were born? Nothing. Therefore nothing could be taken from them. Then, the evils which they brought with them into the world came to them not from a

positive act of God, but from the action of natural causes, from the laws of human generation.

212. It is a well-established fact that the state, not only physical, but also moral, of the parents, influences that of the offspring. The reason is, that generation is not the work of the body alone, but much more of the power and energy of the soul. (1) If, therefore, man after sin was left with a very feeble will, incapable of dominating his animal propensities, the children would naturally inherit this defect, even assuming that their father and mother had already, by the Divine Mercy, been fully justified. For, justification—being a gratuitous gift, and therefore accomplished in that mode and within those limits which God thought fit to assign to it; and God having, for this wise purpose, ordained that it should be purely personal (2)—could not be transmitted by generation. Accordingly, those children must come into the world, both defective in their will and devoid of justification. It is not, then, I repeat, by a positive act of God that the evils endured by the descendants of Adam were inflicted, as though they were penalties deserved for them by their parents: no, these evils were,

(1) See the Author's *Philosophy of Rights* ("Filosofia del Diritto"), nn. 1358—1368. That the mental and moral state of the parents influences the physical, mental, and moral state of their offspring, was always held by all ancient Physicists. The observations of modern physicians and naturalists have confirmed this view, as may be seen in the recent work entitled: *Thoughts on the mental functions, being an attempt to treat Metaphysics as a branch of the physiology of the nervous system.* Edinburgh, 1843, p. 178.

(2) According to the Author, the *person* "is an intellective subject in so far as it contains a supreme active principle" (*Anthropology*, "Antropologia," no. 769).

The *nature* "is all that goes to constitute a being, or to put it in act" (*Psychology*, no. 56).—*Tr.*

as we have said, the result of the action of natural causes, that is, of the laws according to which human nature is propagated.

Let us hear St. Thomas: "Sin (the corruption of the will) does not pass into the descendants of the first parent *by way of demerit*, but *by way of transfusion*, consequent upon the transfusion of nature. For, the act of one (human) person cannot merit or demerit for the whole nature." (1) The transmission, therefore, of original sin is nothing but a necessary consequence of the limitation of human nature, a limitation which could not be avoided if this nature was to be created at all.

213. If after this it were still urged that there is something repugnant in the notion of a being, who, having done no wrong, is miserable, while a God lives and reigns in the universe, I would again beg the objector to remember that here we are discussing the question of *justice*, and there is no injustice in ordaining that wherever there is that moral evil, that corruption of the personal will which constitutes sin (though not freely committed), there also shall be the penalty due to it. A little further on, we shall come to the question of *goodness*, and answer the objection suggested by the difficulty, which there seems to be at first sight, of reconciling the notion of an

(1) "*Peccatum non transit in posteros a primo parente* PER MODUM DEMERITI, *quasi ipse omnibus mortem meruerit et infectionem peccati, sed* PER MODUM TRADUCTIONIS CONSEQUENTIS TRADUCTIONEM NATURÆ. *Non enim unius personæ actus toti naturæ mereri vel demereri potest, nisi limites humanæ naturæ transcendat, ut patet in Christo, qui Deus et homo est; unde a Christo nascimur filii gratiæ, non per carnis traductionem, sed per meritum actionis. Ab Adam vero nascimur filii iræ* PER PROPAGATIONEM, NON PER DEMERITUM." *In II. Sentent., Dist. xx., q. II., a. 3, ad 3m.*

Infinite Goodness with the permission that sin should enter into man by no fault of his own, though only through secondary causes, and without the direct or positive action of God Himself.

214. For the present we will consider that the noble longing which human nature feels for happiness was implanted in it by Him Who, from pure goodness, willed to draw it out of its original nothingness. Now it is certainly only fitting that this goodness, which is infinite, should be in all respects complete, and that therefore no human being should, without his own fault, be made to suffer pain, or be afflicted by it. But let me ask: Is this a matter of *right* in the proper sense of the term? And on what is it founded?—Solely on the *need* of human nature, in other words, on man's *indigence*. Now does indigence constitute a right? Because I am in want of a certain thing, is that thing mine? Or am I at liberty to take it to myself as I please? Moreover, does this indigence come direct from God, or rather is it not, as we have said, a limitation of man's nature, a mere effect of the series of natural causes which was disordered by man himself? Clearly, this is a very different title from those on which rights are founded as men understand the word in their usual intercourse. A right never consists in a mere need; it always supposes something positive, some fact, as would be for example the occupation of a plot of ground that had not been previously occupied by any one. On the contrary, the only title which man can show to God here is that of the poor mendicant, who, to enlist the sympathy of the passers-by, exposes his sores while imploringly asking for the wherewithal to appease the cravings of his

hunger and to cover his nakedness. Whatever human nature has, is God's; it was His before He bestowed it, and it remains unalienably His after He has bestowed it. It is therefore impossible for any man ever to find a title, on the strength of which he may hold God bound to grant him happiness, or to preserve him from evil, or to restore to him all that was bestowed on his nature at first, but which man himself voluntarily cast aside. The only thing which may be fairly alleged on man's behalf in this matter is, that inasmuch as the Divine Goodness is in every way complete and entire, it cannot render or leave its work in man imperfect, it cannot permit that he should without his own fault, suffer *irremediably*, and that a creature made for happiness should be subjected to misery *without just reason*.

But as this relation of congruity between the happiness of an innocent creature and the Goodness of the Creator does not belong to what is properly called justice, but only to the plenitude of goodness, the Divine Justice remains self-vindicated.

215. Nay, the mere notion of *Creator* and of *creature* is enough to shew that any complaint of a created being against the Justice of his Maker is an absurdity. If complaints are at all admissible, they can only refer to His Infinite Goodness. Whatever part God may withdraw of the good He has bestowed on man, He disposes of His own. A debtor might without impropriety complain of the cruelty of a creditor who despoils him of what is necessary for relieving his misery; not of injustice: or if there is something unjust in the fact of the creditor, by that rigid enforcement of his claims, reducing his debtor to extremities, because man's right

to the goods of this earth cannot be unlimited, the same can never apply to the dispositions of God regarding His creature, because His right over it is necessarily full, absolute, and inalienable. Consequently, all repinings against Divine Justice have no meaning except as referred to the Divine Goodness; and this we shall defend presently.

216. But even supposing that the objection based upon the transmission of the evils deserved by the first parent to his descendants could have reference to justice, would it have force as applied to ourselves?

We have already answered this inquiry, but we will put our answer in another form. Agreeably to the terms which God, as supreme Lord, had intimated to the first man, if the latter persevered in innocence, happiness would follow as a result; if he broke the command laid on him, he would be condemned to death. Plainly, this is all mere justice. After the commission of sin, though the seeds of death have, together with the forbidden fruit, entered into Adam's body and into all nature, by which he was surrounded, yet, the execution of the sentence of death is deferred. And this is pure mercy; for it is mercy for the judge to delay the execution of the capital sentence passed on the culprit. Some think it probable that the fruit eaten by Adam contained, as the penalty for sin, a latent poison, by whose malignant action human nature was deteriorated and weakened. Such is the opinion we find in the Hebrew tradition. Be this as it may, Adam's soul and body, after the fall, were very different from what they had been before, and he found in himself concupiscence and mortality. Now, as we have already said, the

law of generation is: *Like parent, like offspring.* This law is not arbitrary, but consequent upon the whole fabric of the animal, and hence none but infirm and mortal children could be born of an infirm and mortal father. As, therefore, the first evil was owing solely to the limitation of created things, and God had nothing to do with it; so the imperfection of the offspring must be attributed solely to imperfection of the generator, and God has nothing to do with it. If, as we have seen, there is no reason for attributing to God the fall of Adam, neither is there any reason for attributing to God the natural effects of that fall. The limited creature transgressed; that transgression produced other evils by virtue of a natural law, and these evils produced others in their turn. However long this chain of evils may be, we must remember that each link of the chain comes from the one before it as a consequence of the limitation of things; that this limitation which leaves the way open to evil is a necessity, and therefore incapable of change. In truth, it would be a contradiction in terms to say that God can create natures that are not limited; since the very fact of a nature not being self-existent, but receiving its existence from another, is itself a limitation. The propagation, therefore, of physical evil from parent to offspring is not difficult to explain; and as to that of moral evil, it follows naturally, inasmuch as this evil consists in the prevalence of morbid animality over the enfeebled personal will.

217. No one who is at all capable of reflection will now insist further and object, that if human nature, as created, was to prove so imperfect, God ought to have created a better nature. In the first place,

this supposed better nature would, by the same law of limitation, have likewise been subject to evils, and even to greater evils; for it must be observed that *the greater the good of which a created nature is capable, the greater is the evil to which it is liable.* In the second place, this objection, if it were properly understood, would be impossible, and whoever makes it does not in reality know what he says. *Man cannot desire any nature but his own;* he cannot desire to be an Angel, or an Archangel, or any other thing howsoever excellent it may be. The reason is, that this desire would imply the desire of the destruction and annihilation of his own nature, the desire, namely, of that which every being essentially and invincibly abhors; and this absurdity shows the absurdity and impossibility of that imaginary desire. (1)

(1) That neither man, nor any other being can desire a nature superior to his own, is distinctly held by St. Thomas. Here are his words: "*Nulla res quæ est in inferiori gradu naturæ potest appetere superioris naturæ gradum, quia esse si transferretur in gradum superioris naturæ . . . . jam ipsum non esset. Sed in hoc imaginatio decipitur: quia enim homo appetit esse in altiori gradu quantum ad aliqua accidentalia, quæ possunt crescere sine corruptione subjecti, existimat quod possit appetere altiorem gradum naturæ, in quem pervenire non posset nisi esse desineret.*" S. p. I., q. LXIII., art. 3.

CHAPTER VII.

A FIRST VINDICATION OF THE DIVINE GOODNESS, ON THE GROUND THAT MAN, FROM WANT OF COMPETENT KNOWLEDGE, CANNOT, WITHOUT RASHNESS, SO MUCH AS FRAME AN OBJECTION AGAINST THAT GOODNESS.

218. It remains, therefore, for us to consider whether there be anything derogatory to the Divine Goodness in the fact of God having permitted the sin of our first parent. For, that sin once committed, punishment became a necessity, and the effect of that punishment, consisting in moral and physical evil, must, by the action of a natural law, be regularly transmitted from parent to offspring throughout the entire human race. Hence, if any just cause of complaint against God's Goodness exists, it can be found only in that permission.

219. Here I may as well observe at once that I cannot, in regard to such permission, say what I said when speaking of the possibility of evil, namely, that omnipotence itself could not prevent it; since in the notion of God withholding that permission there is no such absurdity as we discover in the notion of God preventing the *possibility* of evil (ch. iv). Undoubtedly, if God had willed to prevent Adam's fall, He could have done so without interfering with Adam's liberty. Could not the Almighty have assisted His intelligent

and free creature in such a way that it should not fail in its action? Has He not in His hands a sublime power by which He can move liberty unerringly to a fixed end without at the same time destroying it? Revelation tells us that He has; natural reason itself proves it to us irrefragably; and he would indeed have an imperfect notion of the nature of God's Power who should deny this. Let the manner in which man's liberty and God's Omnipotence are conjoined be as recondite as we will, truth compels us to admit the one as well as the other, and I have, at the beginning of this book, assumed them both as postulates. (1)

220. If, then, God could have prevented Adam's fall, and thus saved him and his whole race from a foul stain and from the lamentable train of evils consequent upon it, why did He not do so? Would not this have been in harmony with His Sovereign Goodness?

Such is the question I must now answer, and my answer is in the negative.

There are certain things which at first sight appear to be acts of goodness, but in point of fact are cruelty; contrariwise, there are certain actions which, when first seen, cause a shock to one's feelings by their apparent cruelty and barbarity; but on being examined more closely, are found to contain the very flower of kindness and of most exquisite love. It is wisdom alone that can lead goodness to its ultimate effect, to its true completion. An unwise goodness which sees but few things and those only close at hand, cannot provide

(1) On the conciliation of human *liberty* with the necessary principle of *causality*, see the Author's *Anthropology in aid of Moral Science* ("Antropologia in servigio della Scienza Morale") nn. 636–643.—Also, on the *limits* of human liberty, see the same work, nn. 650–763.—*Tr.*

for what does not fall within its mental vision or lies far away in the distance; but a wise goodness whose views are far-reaching and embrace a vast range of things, seems sometimes harsh and neglectful of partial goods, whereas it purposely leaves them aside for the moment in the certainty of gathering them up afterwards increased a thousand-fold in the great whole which it ever contemplates.

221. We can see from this, that it is by no means an easy matter to decide what best beseems a wise goodness which governs a large circle of affairs; and the less easy in proportion as that goodness is wiser and greater, and the sphere of its government larger and more complicated. To estimate aright the goodness of the dispositions of an eminently wise being, one must be possessed of a wisdom equal to his.

222. The true way to form a just appreciation of the goodness of a government is by setting the sum total of virtue and happiness which that government secures to the commonwealth against the sum total of the attendant misery and vices, and striking the balance. (1)

According to this principle, for man to be in a position to judge aright whether the permission of Adam's sin was the more eligible alternative for God to take or not, in view of the greatest good, he ought to have a thorough comprehension of all the consequences of that sin: I mean of the new order of things which the Divine Omnipotence drew from it. He

(1) On the fundamental principle of good government, see the Author's Work, *Society and its Object* ("La Società ed il suo Fine"), ch. xxxii.; also *The Main Cause whereby Human Societies stand and fall* ("La Sommaria Cagione, etc., Ch. xii.").—*Tr.*

would have to compare this latter order with that which would have ensued in the event of Adam remaining innocent. Consequently, he would require, on the one hand, to know perfectly the same primitive order, destroyed as it was at its very commencement, and, on the other, to have enough mental penetration fully to understand (calculating all its parts and grasping all its excellencies) the system under which mankind is now governed, and which is intimately linked with that of the entire universe. (1) If there be any one who thinks himself possessed of all these cognitions, who thinks he can grapple with a problem of such prodigious magnitude, and thus pronounce whether the Eternal, in permitting the old order to fall that the present one might be substituted for it, did right or wrong, such a one will be able to make the objection we are speaking of with some show of reason. But if it would be absurd for any mortal to presume so much of himself, why do we not all rather adore in silence the overwhelming greatness of the Wisdom of God?

(1) That the universe, with all its numberless parts, is ordered into a wonderful unity, is shown by the Author in his *Introduction to the Gospel according to St. John* ("Introduzione del Vangelo secondo Giovanni"), pp. 32–34. Turin edition of 1882.—*Tr.*

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE PERMISSION OF ADAM'S SIN, THE GOODNESS OF GOD SHINES FORTH IN THIS, THAT, THROUGH THE GRACE OF THE REDEEMER, THERE IS NOW OPENED TO MAN A SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL CONTENTMENT FAR OUTWEIGHING THE TEMPORAL EVILS CAUSED BY THAT SIN.

223. Nevertheless, concerning the lofty purposes of His Sovereign Wisdom in the great matter we are discussing, God has not left us altogether in the dark. He has vouchsafed as much light as we, in our present state, are capable of receiving. His word, ever full of reasonableness and goodness, even when it enjoins Faith, informs us of the design of His mercy, that by meditating on it we may be filled with the tenderest emotions of love. It tells us distinctly, that, turning to account the occasion given Him by the sin of Adam, He established on the ruins of the old order of things another order, more sublime and more magnificent, and that where sin did abound grace abounded more.(1) It has, on this point, revealed wonderful secrets, yet of such a nature as to be more difficult to understand, the more presumptuously man seeks to be unjust towards his Maker.

224. For, in the midst of the temporal evils which justly afflict fallen humanity, through the Redemption

(1) Rom. v. 10.

which took sin away by bestowing grace, there was introduced into the human spirit a new and inexhaustible source of contentment, springing from a generous love of the very justice that inflicts those evils, and from the hope of a better, supremely blissful, interminable life.

225. Many imagine that the highest human good consists in bodily enjoyment, and the extreme of human misery in bodily pain; and so they find it very difficult to understand how a man's happiness can be increased by restricting him as to the former, and still more by subjecting him to the latter. But how mistaken they are! Verily, the true seat of happiness, and therefore the aptitude for supreme enjoyment, is in the intelligent spirit alone.

Spiritual pleasures and spiritual pains are of a kind not to be compared with those of the body. To enjoy these pleasures, man will often encounter the severest bodily hardships. Sometimes, to an illusion of his imagination (itself a proof of his interior energy), to a desire of revenge, to a great ambition, to a passion for what the world calls glory, to a miserable vanity, but much more to the immense attractions of virtue, he will sacrifice the things he holds most dear, and his very life: the most appalling torments will have no terrors for him. It is by the energy of his spirit that he is enabled to brave all these things, not only with firmness, but also with alacrity and joy; by this it is that he can boast of knowing how to die. Man has simply to reflect a little on himself, in order to see that there is within him a spirit capable of such greatness and such sublime happiness as to find, in an increase of virtue, ample compensation for whatever bodily afflictions he may

have to endure. I would that this noble property were seriously considered which the human spirit has of vanquishing, by a joy peculiar to itself, all miseries of the body. Those who do not feel this grand moral energy in themselves may very easily observe it in many of their fellow men, and if they do so in good faith, they will not be able to resist the conviction that man can in very deed attain to this pinnacle of excellence, to a fortitude so great as to enable him to behold with a joyous and smiling countenance the frail tenement of his body crushed and buried under the ruins of a tottering universe.

Now this sublimity of virtue, and this most exquisite joy, wholly spiritual, triumphant over the sufferings and therefore over the pleasures, too, of the corporeal substance, would have been impossible, if man had not experienced these sufferings. Inasmuch, then, as temporal evils serve man as a step for ascending to a virtue and a contentment of supreme excellence, which he could not have known in his former state, they ought to be accounted as a veritable blessing for him.

226. But could not God have given this virtue and this contentment without its being necessary for man to pass through the ordeal of suffering?—Whoever asks this question shews that he has not caught the drift of my argument. If that virtue, and the jubilant triumph which springs from it, are the result of vanquishing pain, surely pain is a necessary condition of it, a condition which not even God could do away with; for it would be ridiculous to say that God can bring about the vanquishing of pain where there is no pain to be vanquished.

Well may we admire the ways of the Good-

ness of God! If He has, together with sin, permitted evils to beset the body of man, He has at the same time rendered him all the richer in spiritual goods, which far outweigh all he can suffer, since they are the result of a triumph obtained over those evils. Nor could this triumph have been secured without that permission, any more than there can be a victory without a battle, owing to the natural limitation of things, which God could not change. Thus man's present condition, through Faith in the Redeemer and His promises, is to be ranked higher than the state of innocence. For, in the state of innocence he would have been incapable of tasting the delights of sacrifice and winning the honours of mastery over pain.—The one is as much higher than the other as joy of spirit outweighs bodily pain, that is to say, infinitely, because the order of spiritual things excels the order of corporeal things, not in degree but in kind, and because the predominance of the intelligent spirit over the instincts of the animal nature can be increased without any assignable limit.

227. It will, of course, be observed that I speak of man's condition merely in regard to the good and evil to which he is subject in this life, since my argument here extends no further. This is the least favourable view that can be taken of the new order of things, occasioned by the sin of our first parents. How much easier would it be to vindicate the Wisdom of God in the permission of that sin by showing the superiority of the new system over the old by a reference to the other parts of this system? For example, I might point out the eternal goods prepared for man, more exquisite and excellent in proportion to the higher virtue which

he can now attain. I might indicate the treasures of sanctity and bliss accumulated in a single Man, Him in whom all things have been restored, namely Jesus Christ—treasures so transcendantly great that He is, in Himself alone, worth much more than the rest of the human race taken together, even as the body is worth more than the garments. I might furthermore call attention to the excellence of the new grace over the old; to the light of glory shining infinitely brighter through that wisdom and goodness which knew how to draw so much good from the evil of the creature; to the victory of God's power over the rebellious sensitive nature, and also over the diabolical host, vanquished by its own weapons; to the rejoicings of the countless angelic intelligences, who sing praise in contemplating the immensity of the divine conception. I might even bid men admire and adore justice itself glorified in the chastisement of the rebel angels, who, having it in their power to gain salvation, deliberately preferred their own ruin—an evil which, like the sin of our first parent, God did not permit save for the end that the virtue and happiness of innumerable just might be produced and increased, and that the universal order, given the fundamental conditions, might prove to be, not only most magnificent and most beautiful, but also the *best among all possible orders*, that is, such as would contain in itself the *maximum* of happiness attained at the cost of the relative *minimum* of misery. I say "*minimum* of misery," because, owing to the limitation of created things, neither a virtue of a certain kind nor a happiness of a certain kind could have existed without the accompaniment of some moral evil and some misery.

In dealing with creatures, the Eternal had predetermined certain conditions, in accordance with which to solve, as it were, a stupendous "Problem of *Maxima* and *Minima*." The problem was this: "To find how the universe which He decreed to create could be made to yield the greatest possible amount of happiness with the least amount of misery possible." Such is the Optimism I speak of,—in fact, the only true Optimism. Now, who will pretend to be able to convict the Eternal of error in His calculation, and to prove that He has given a wrong solution of the problem?—But we shall return to this great problem in the third book, where we shall set forth its data, and give some faint idea of the way to discover its solution.

CHAPTER IX.

RECAPITULATION.—THE QUESTION OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF TEMPORAL EVIL.

228. To sum up: It has thus far been shewn that temporal evil entered into the world by an act of *justice*, that is to say, as a punishment of the sin committed by the first parent of the human race.

That the *efficient cause*, if we may so call it, of the first evil that ever was on this earth—I mean *moral evil*—was man himself, by nature a free agent; and this necessarily entailed *physical evil*, the punishment of moral evil.

That God was the *permissive cause* of the sin of Adam and the ordainer of its penalty as an act of justice; but the propagation of moral and physical evil from parent to offspring is due to natural laws, and to the constitution of created beings and especially of human nature, which is transmitted through generation.

That even in permitting the fall of our first parent, God acted, not only with *Infinite Wisdom*, but also with *Infinite Goodness*, inasmuch as that fall, through which the infernal enemy intended to ruin the Creator's work, was in His hands to be the occasion for introducing a new order of things far grander than the first, more excellent, more glorious to

Himself, more advantageous to man—the order centring in the Redemption.

229. It now remains that we should treat of the distribution of temporal good and evil, the second of the questions which we undertook to discuss (172), and upon which indeed the things already said about the origin of evil will be found to have thrown no little light. Let us state the difficulty clearly:—

The existence of temporal evil on this earth has in it nothing repugnant to reason; nothing that can justly be regarded as any disparagement to those sublime attributes which belong to the Creator and Preserver of all things. Granting, then, that in man's present state temporal good must necessarily be mixed up with evil, the question arises: Will evil happen by blind chance, and without God having anything to do in the matter, or contrariwise? And if the mode is wholly subject to God's control, will He not so provide as that temporal evil may invariably fall on the sinner, and temporal good be reserved for the just, who are faithful to Him and do their best to imitate Him in His beneficence? Why, then, do wicked men so often revel in prosperity, while the innocent are groaning in affliction, and trampled upon by the guilty?

230. Innumerable are the considerations I might bring forward in answer to this complaint, which is prompted rather by the weakness of human sensitivity than by the dictates of calm reason. But I will content myself with touching upon the chief; and these will lead me at last to set forth those most excellent and wise laws by which the Eternal regulates

and apportions, for an end worthy of Himself, all temporal good and evil.

I shall show, therefore, that temporal evil is always, in the long run, reserved for vice, and temporal good for virtue; and, as we proceed, it will appear that the accomplishment of this great purpose is admirably promoted by those very irregularities (as they seem to be for the moment), which are apt to alarm weak-minded persons, and to scandalize those who, in consequence of not having a firm faith in Revelation, are likewise deficient in that moral strength which is necessary for a consistent belief in the depositions of reason.

CHAPTER X.

AS NO MAN IS PERFECTLY FREE FROM SIN, SO NO MAN CAN AFFIRM THAT IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF TEMPORAL GOOD AND EVIL HE IS WRONGFULLY DEALT WITH.

231. Such, first of all, is my contention as regards the question in hand. It is impossible for any man ever to prove either to himself or to others, that, in the distribution of temporal good and evil, he is unjustly treated. This would be true even though we were to admit that virtue ought always to be rewarded with temporal good, and vice punished with temporal evil; and though we were to suppose that God had not in store those other far better and greater goods, and those terrible chastisements, by which He will most amply compensate the just for the sufferings they have endured, and make the wicked bitterly regret their unlawful enjoyments.

232. Even conceding all this, for a man to be able to prove beyond all doubt that it is an injustice to afflict him with temporal calamities, it would be necessary that he should be perfectly free from all moral taint. Only such a man as this would have any title to complain if he were compelled to suffer. He who is not such, be his iniquity never so slight, is bound to confess that humiliation and chastisement are fully his due; and if he will not confess it, he is, for this

very reason, most unjust. His complaint justifies the Providence that inflicts suffering on him, because that complaint is itself a crime of arrogance and temerity.

233. This is true, I repeat, however slight a man's iniquity may be, because between *moral evil* and *physical evil* there can be no proportion. *Moral evil* is in a sense infinite; because infinite is the authority of the law which sin violates; necessary (1) the moral order which sin attempts to overthrow; infinite the dignity of God Whom sin offends. Consequently, no temporal evil, however great, is an adequate punishment for even the least among formal sins.

234. Now, what man on earth will dare to affirm that he is absolutely sinless? Does not Holy Scripture tell us that "the very justices of men are, in the sight of God, no better than filthy rags," (2) and that "every man is a liar," (3) and that "if we shall say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"? (4) Wherefore, let every one interrogate his inmost conscience, and, in the light of the response it will give, judge what to think of himself if he should complain of his treatment by Divine Providence. It is impossible that a man's conscience, provided it be sincere, should not witness against him in some point or other. Even the heathens recognized this; and hence they said that "to err is human," as if to signify that failing and human nature are two inseparable things, and

(1) *Necessary*. All things that are necessary by nature (and such is the *moral order*) are infinite, at least in this sense, that no power can alter or destroy them.—*Tr.*

2) *Quasi pannus mens truatæ universæ justitiæ nostræ.* Isai. lxiv. 6.

3) Ps. cxv. 11.—Rom. iii. 9–23. (4) 1. Jo. i. 8.

that where human nature is, there must also be some moral fault, some sin. Either, therefore, conscience reproves us, and then why should we repine against suffering? or it blinds us into believing ourselves to be morally irreproachable, and then this very blindness, or rather this profound lie of our proud heart, would render us deserving of the most severe chastisements.

235. It is true that if man is considered, not in what he has by nature, but in so far as he is united with Jesus Christ through sanctifying grace, he may be called righteous, or, to use the language of Holy Scripture, "just." But this makes no difference as to our point. For even the justified Christian falls into the lesser kind of sins, for which the sufferings of this life are never too severe a punishment. Besides, a man incorporated with Christ is just only by the justice which Christ communicates to him. Now, in the first place, the Christian has a thousand reasons for never complaining of the evils that afflict him; hence there is no need of spending any words to justify in his eyes that Providence which he continually blesses and adores in all things. Moreover, even supposing that a man has been justified, can he, without express revelation, be quite certain of his own righteousness? All he says, all he can say, is what was said by the Apostle:—"I am not conscious to myself of anything, but I am not hereby justified."(1) For, Holy Scripture, in which he believes, gives him plainly to understand that "Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred, but all things are kept uncertain for the time

(1) 1. Cor. iv. 4.

to come." (1) Thus, while the true Christian is the only person who can be entitled to the appellation of "just," he emphatically disclaims all certain knowledge of his state, considering it a profound secret known to God alone. (2)

236. And even if he were assured of his own righteousness by an express revelation, he would not on that account dream of claiming exemption from temporal sufferings; for he knows too well that it is not his own, but comes to him from Jesus Christ. Hence under the royal robe of sanctity which clothes and adorns him, he still sees in himself a vile sinner, deserving of all chastisement. For, of himself, as of himself, only evil could come, and if he now possesses any good, he owes it all to the fact of his having been graciously incorporated with his suffering Redeemer, the root of sin continuing to remain in him as long as he lives on this earth.

(1) Eccles. ix. 1, 2.—The doctrine that without express revelation from God no one can be certain as to whether he be in the state of grace or not, is an article of Christian Faith, defined by the Council of Trent. *De Justificat.* c. ix.—*Tr.*

(2) Eccles. ix. 1.

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CHAPTER XI.

UNDER A PERFECT GOVERNMENT OF THE UNIVERSE, WHOSE FUNDAMENTAL CONDITION IS THAT IT SHOULD OBTAIN THE *MAXIMUM* OF GOOD, NATURAL VIRTUE HAS NO CLAIM TO EXEMPTION FROM ALL SUFFERING: IT CAN ONLY DEMAND THAT FROM AMONG ALL THE SERIES OF CAUSES AND EFFECTS THAT ARE POSSIBLE, THAT WHICH IS THE MOST FAVOURABLE TO IT SHALL BE CHOSEN.

237. But let us return on our steps a little. Since the just Christian neither has, nor can have, a right to complain of temporal sufferings, it follows that the discussion in which we are now engaged can only regard those men who are just by what is called *natural virtue*. (1) Now if we consider natural virtue alone, even supposing it to be perfect of its kind and to be known with certaninty to exist—and neither supposition is ever verified in reality—can the admission be allowed, that temporal good and evil must be distributed in the ratio of the degree of natural virtue and vice, neither more nor less? Certainly not. For, speaking of the natural order alone, what is requisite that it may

(1) By natural virtue, or virtue of the natural order, is meant the conformity of the will with the dictates of the moral law as known by the light of reason unassisted by supernatural or divinely revealed truths. Human nature, being grievously wounded by original sin, cannot practise perfect natural virtue as it might if it existed in a state of perfect soundness or integrity.—*Tr.*

be directed with supreme wisdom and goodness? Nothing else than that there may result from it in the end the greatest possible good and the least possible evil (222—230). Hence pure good, good unmixed with evil, either is altogether impossible, or if it is possible, this very circumstance would prevent the attainment of the *maximum* good, which is the aim of a supremely, and therefore infinitely wise Ruler; since, as we have seen, certain goods of superior excellence cannot absolutely be attained without the accompaniment of certain evils. It follows, that to know what and how much good the man possessed of natural virtue might lay claim to, it would be necessary to consider all that grand order which is formed by the things of the universe taken in their totality, that is to say, in the totality of the human race and of its duration.

238. Viewing the universe in this way, we find that it is governed by general laws, as well natural, that is flowing from the very *nature* of the beings forming it, as supernatural, that is of *grace*. I say of *grace*, because grace also follows certain general laws established by the wisdom of God. Among these laws we notice some rare exceptions, or *miracles*, both in *nature* and in *grace*, these exceptions being likewise pre-ordained by God and subordinated to laws or reasons of their own. From this we can see the truth of that saying (provided it be properly understood) "That every antecedent state of the world has in itself the reason of the state which next follows it." For the few exceptions do not abrogate the law which regulates the general order of the universe, indeed, it would not be difficult to shew that they are themselves links in the unity of the great design. Thus the whole course of this great order

of things is, from beginning to end, connected together as effects are connected with their causes, or consequences with their principles.

Hence the great work of God's wisdom consisted in deciding upon the position to be assigned to the beings just created, the motion to be given to free natures, and the first events to be permitted or prevented in accordance with that prevision which, standing at the beginning of all things, grasped with perfect clearness the whole of the immense series of future events, down to the very last.

239. Now, temporal evil as well as temporal good, in all its forms, is but a part of those events, bound up and interwoven with the rest, and therefore brought about by the same natural causes and according to the same natural laws by which the universe is governed. Consequently, its right or wrong distribution depends on the position of those first data. To this height is it necessary to rise in order that one may be able to say whether the existing distribution of temporal good and evil is wise or unwise, just or unjust. It is necessary to go back in thought to that moment in which God, when creating things, assigned to each its place, and either by His permission or His action, controlled the first movements of free natures. It is above all necessary to determine what God had to do then, in order that the entire universe might be found, at the end of time, to have yielded the *maximum* sum of virtue and happiness that could have been attained under any among all the combinations of events possible. It is, in one word, necessary to embrace in a single calculation all the facts of the world, great and small, past, present, and still to come, through the knowledge of all

their laws and relations. This is what must be done by him who would pass judgment on the apportionment of temporal good and evil: this is the problem which every sciolist thinks himself competent to argue about, which gives occasion to Christians of weak faith to murmur, and to the impious to blaspheme.

240. I think this reflection is quite enough to show how absurd and rash are all the objections raised against Divine Providence on the score of the distribution of temporal good and evil. That virtuous man, for example, fell wounded in battle, or was suddenly struck by lightning, or was buried under the ruins of his house. To be in a position fairly to complain of God, what would he have to do? He would have to submit to an exact calculation the entire series of the events which have preceded and prepared his mishap; and he could not do this without going back through each of the links of this prodigiously long chain of causes and effects, until he reaches that first instant in which things began to exist and act. The proper question, therefore, for him to ask, would not be: "Why was I, an innocent man, hit by the enemy's bullet, whilst the comrade at my side, a thief and a blasphemer, escaped unhurt?" or, "Why did God strike me with lightning?" or, "Why did He make my house fall upon me?" But it would be: "Why did God permit all this immense series of events which has resulted in my death?" "Why did He so dispose things in the beginning?" or, "Why did He not save me by a miracle?" This is a very different question from the other; and to answer it in a rational way, he would require to know whether in case God had, among the other series of events that were possible, chosen one in

which his life would have been spared, there would not have ensued the deaths of many persons as virtuous as himself, or more so. And in case God had saved him by a miracle, he would require to know how it would have affected all the rest of the universe; how much more, perhaps, virtue would have had to suffer by the change in the whole chain of events, whereof his death was a link. He would, moreover, require to know whether miracles do not themselves form part of the laws which govern grace and give order to an invisible universe. It is plain, therefore, that all complaints against Divine Providence, all murmurings, proceed from littleness of mind, from incapacity to understand what it really is that one complains of, or murmurs against.

241. To demand a change, either natural or miraculous, in the pre-established order of things, is therefore the same as to demand of God a new universe, a new arrangement or combination of events from among all those that could be made, by changing in all possible ways the relative positions of the countless beings and actions of beings which exist in the universe. How overwhelmingly great must be the number of these several combinations will be readily seen by any one who is at all familiar with this kind of calculation. Let him try to ascertain in how many ways any considerable quantity of numbers, say from one to one hundred, can be arranged, and he will soon perceive that his task is not likely to come so speedily to an end. The virtuous man, then, who asks to be saved from the death brought upon him in the present series of events, asks for nothing less than a new universe. But if one virtuous man may do this, all the

other virtuous men who are subject to different temporal calamities may, of course, do the same; and so there will be a multitude of different universes asked of God at one and the same time. Moreover, whichever among these new universes God may think fit to choose, many other virtuous men will have to suffer in consequence, and thus become equally entitled, each to ask for a new universe on his own behalf . . . . O men! ye know not what ye ask. How could God satisfy your indiscreet and contradictory wishes? O hapless world, if its fortunes, if its government were to depend on human minds! It would be divided, and torn asunder into a thousand factions by a perpetual strife of desires and opinions: all order would disappear from it, and in a short time everything would fall into confusion and chaos.

242. If, then, the virtuous suffer, and the guilty enjoy a transitory triumph, let no one be scandalized at this, since it is necessary for the order of the universe.(1) The virtuous must not complain, the

(1) The system proposed by Pope, Shaftesbury, and Bolingbroke for vindicating Divine Providence against the objection based on the existence and distribution of temporal evils, is widely different from that set forth in these pages. Those writers said indeed that "Evils are necessary for the order of the universe;" but they considered this order only in its materiality and external appearance, as, so to speak, a spectacle presented to the human mind for contemplation. In short, they spoke of a *physical order*, and found it excellent because governed by *general* and *constant* laws, to which the most minute atom is subject no less than the greatest of the celestial luminaries, thus producing an admirable regularity. But is this sufficient to vindicate Providence? Of what use to a man is the maintenance of the laws of the universe and the fixed order which it presents to the mind, if these laws and this order are not directed to his happiness? Would he not, reasonably enough, think it better for him that the law of gravitation, for example, were less constant, when in consequence of its exact fulfilment he must be buried under a falling mass of earth? In our

wicked cannot glory; for all is permitted by that wisdom which only delays retribution to the end that justice may at last be perfectly satisfied.

Natural virtue, therefore, cannot reasonably claim to be always exempt from temporal evil and attended by temporal good; all it can fairly rely upon is, that the Supreme Controller of the universe has, among all the combinations of events that were possible, chosen the one which is least unfavourable to it.

system, temporal evils are shown to be necessary to the universe, but in another sense. By *order* I mean a *moral* order; and I say that these evils are necessary inasmuch as, without them, it would not be possible for humanity to attain the *maximum* sum of virtue and of happiness. From the system of the writers I have named, who consider the *physical order* only, forgetting its relation with virtue and happiness (the only things we care about) there comes their favourite saying, that *All is good*. In our system the existence of evil is not denied; on the contrary, it is admitted as a manifest, undeniable fact; but it is also affirmed that "The saying *All is good*, taken in an absolute sense and apart from the hope of a future," as even Voltaire observes, "is nothing but an insult to the sorrows of human life" *(Préf. au Poëme sur le Désastre de Lisbonne)*. We cannot, in an absolute sense, say that *All is good*, unless we take away the very idea of evil, as those do who consider physical things in themselves alone, without any reference to intellective and moral beings, for whom alone evil exists. Therefore, in our system, the expression *All is good*, changes into this other and more correct one: *All serves unto good*, that is, all helps to produce the *maximum* amount of virtue and happiness in the human race. We agree, therefore, with the following comment which M. de Voltaire makes on the system of the three writers above mentioned: *Il est clair que leur système sape la Religion Chrétienne par ses fondements, et n' explique rien du tout (Dictionnaire Philosophique*, Art. *Du Bien)*. On the other hand, however, we must leave him to reconcile this statement of his with what he says in another place: *Pope avait dit tout est bien en un sens qui était très-recevable, et ils* (Pope's followers) *le disent aujourd' hui en un sens qui peut être combattu (Préf. au Poëme sur le Désastre, etc.)*.

CHAPTER XII.

HUMAN NATURE REMAINS CORRUPT EVEN AFTER THE PERSON HAS BEEN JUSTIFIED; TEMPORAL EVILS FALL UPON CORRUPT NATURE, NOT UPON THE JUSTIFIED PERSON; THE TRUE CAUSE OF THESE EVILS LIES IN THE CORRUPTION OF NATURE ITSELF; GOD MERELY PERMITS THEM.

243. But the man of the purely natural order has never existed. And is human nature perfect now? Revelation and experience answer in the negative. Both the one and the other tell us in unmistakable language that moral disorder is inborn in man. How often do our evil tendencies forestall the decrees of our will! Where, then, can perfect natural virtue be found, if nature itself is corrupt?

But Revelation deposes to more than this. While assuring us that man is, through the merits of Jesus Christ, from being unjust rendered just, it teaches also that, together with Christian justice which sanctifies his person, he retains in his nature (1) a part of the original infirmity, which causes him to fall into a variety of minor offences (2) as well as into moral

(1) See note to n. 212.

(2) It is an Article of Christian Faith, defined by the holy Council of Trent, that a Christian even in the state of grace cannot (unless he be favoured with an extraordinary privilege from God) go through this life without committing some venial sins (See *De Justificat*, Can. xxiii). He can, however, always diminish the number of these sins, and the degree of their *wilfulness*.—*Tr.*

imperfections, and which is not destroyed save by death. And this truth is, of itself, quite enough to show how unreasonable it would be even for the justified Christian to claim immunity from temporal ills, which indeed, besides being just penalties, are also salutary medicines.

244. How much more unreasonable, if we consider that these ills, on the one hand, are the effect of the corruption of the nature common to all men, and that, on the other, they do not directly come from God, Who merely permits them, but from the very laws of nature?

This latter fact, of which I have availed myself for the purpose of explaining and justifying the existence of temporal evil, serves equally for justifying its distribution; since this evil is likewise distributed through the action of natural causes, nor does it in any way affect the *personality*, which by its spiritual and moral excellence rises far above all sensible sufferings, but only the corrupt *nature*.

245. But we will present the same truths under another aspect. So excellent is man's nature, that whenever truth and righteousness present themselves to his mental vision, he understands them and can love them.

That natural light, however, in which he beholds the fair aspect of truth and good, renders him no further service than that of enabling him to dispose all his actions in a fitting manner, and to direct them to a perfection confined to the natural order. His knowledge is an abstract knowledge, a rule of life, an object of supreme delight to the intelligence, of which it forms, as it were, the chief element, but

not a real or subsistent (1) being in the possession of which he can find that complete happiness of which he is capable. Now God, in His goodness, not wishing to limit man's enjoyment to the perpetual contemplation of an abstract idea of truth, or of a purely negative idea of the Divinity, (2) having, on the contrary, destined him for the possession of Himself Subsistent Truth, Infinite Being, capable of being possessed and enjoyed; God, I say, communed directly with man as soon as created. He presented Himself to him as his Maker and his God, and imposed on him a precept which was not found in man's reason itself; thereby making known to him the fact that human reason applied to the beings which form the universe (3) was not the source of a complete legislation, but that there was, beyond reason, a superior Will from which new precepts emanated. Thus did man come to be constituted in a positive relation with his Maker—that is to say, a relation not necessarily flowing from the conditions of his nature.

To man, therefore, destined to a supernatural end,

(1) In Rosmini's Philosophy, *real* being and *subsistent* being are synonymous terms.—*Tr.*

(2) The *negative* idea of a thing, according to Rosmini, is that which we have when we know that the thing *exists*, without at the same time having experience of its *nature*. Such is the idea of God which it is possible for man to gain by the light of his natural reason alone. For four fundamental and irrefragable proofs of God's *existence*, see Rosmini's *Philosophical System*, translated by Mr. Thos. Davidson (Kegan Paul, Trench and Co., London). —*Tr.*

(3) How reason applied to sensible objects becomes a principle of moral obligation, is explained by the Author in several of his works. See, for example, the *Treatise on Moral Conscience* ("Trattato della Coscienza Morale"), B. ii., ch. iii., art. 3; and *Principles of Moral Science* ("Principii della Scienza Morale"), Ch. v., art. 6, 7.—*Tr.*

the possession of a good, different from himself and infinite, became thenceforth a necessity. No sooner was the knowledge of this good imparted to him through grace, than he began to taste its sweetness, saw the possibility of its full enjoyment, and the duty incumbent on him of securing it. But this Infinite Good, to which a man who has had any experience thereof longs to be united, cannot be reached by his own natural powers. Being, as a creature, infinitely beneath God, he can only receive Him in that measure in which God thinks fit to communicate Himself.

Here we must try clearly to realize to ourselves the fact that the impossibility of the intellective creature gaining the possession of the Infinite Good by its own powers, arises from its unavoidable limitation. Not even God could create an intelligence capable of attaining, by its own natural powers, to the vision of Himself! It is always necessary that God should, of His own free act, present Himself to the intellect, illumining it by His presence;(1) else, how will the intellect be able to fix its gaze on God's Essence, which it neither has in itself, nor meets with in any created being? Hence, Holy Scripture, with great sublimity of expression, calls God a *Hidden God*, (2) thus distinguishing Him from the false divinities of men's inventing. As a consequence of this limitation, the intellective creature, in order to attain a supernatural end, stands in need of God's grace and

(1) This is manifest also from the fourth limitation of human reason, which we set forth in the preceding book, Chapters XVII—XXV., and owing to which our mind cannot think of any object, unless the same be presented to it by some external agent.

(2) Isai. xlv. 15.

goodness. And Revelation teaches that God, after bringing man into existence, favoured him, out of pure loving kindness, with His friendship. In the Book of Genesis, God is described as a loving father conversing familiarly with Adam, to enable him by grace to secure that glorious end which would raise him to so high an estate, and for gaining which his nature neither had nor could have the requisite power.

Let it be well noted, that this friendship and this supernatural aid was *pure grace*, and that man, after receiving it, rejected it of his own perverse will. Then God withdrew from nature which He had been protecting and perfecting by His presence. He seemed, in the words of Holy Scripture, to say: "I will hide My face from them, and will consider what their last end (abandoned as they are to themselves) shall be."(1) Thus was the first man bereft of so necessary an aid, and left with his own nature only, and this nature grievously injured by his own free act. Hence | for the reason we have stated above, nos. 212, 216 | the same aid would, as a matter of course, be wanting in his descendants also. God has not deprived them of what once belonged to them; He has merely withdrawn what was His own. They have received all that belongs to human nature, but such as their father had rendered it, such as he could give. Now, human nature, reduced in this way to a state which unfitted it for the possession of God, could no longer exist without feeling

(1) Deuteron. xxx., 20.—Such is the threat, as terrible as it is mild, which God intimated to His rebellious people through the lips of Moses. No words could express more forcibly the impotence of man and the extreme need he has of God. To humble man's pride, God does not at all require to smite him in a direct manner; He has only to abandon him, to leave him to himself, free to do what he will and what he can.

a perpetual thirst for a good capable of satisfying it: I mean, for those supernatural waters whose sweetness it had once tasted. In any case, it was a thirst not to be allayed by anything this earth could offer; because corrupt man found neither order nor moral repose in himself. And yet he could not renounce the desire of quenching that thirst. What must be the result? A continual and restless endeavour to find some way of appeasing that desire, either in the objects around him, or in himself.

246. Here pride and sensuality discover themselves. Man, fallen back upon himself, no longer cared for that supernatural aid which he had not. He felt, on the contrary, a keener, a more presumptuous sentiment of his own powers, and relied upon still being able, by means of them alone, to obtain full contentment: here he showed his pride. Finding, however, on occasions, that this confidence betrayed him, he poured himself out upon created things; greedily threw himself upon every alluring object; sought happiness everywhere; pursued every phantom wherein he seemed to himself to see some prospect of satisfaction; separated from God, he attached himself to material things: this is how sensuality showed itself.

Thus human nature—not indeed because injured or smitten by the Divine Judge, but simply by being left to itself in the state to which man's own free action had reduced it, and deprived of the gratuitous gift which he had by that action cast away, and which was no part of itself, not because constituted imperfectly by its Author, but by reason of its own limitation—was no longer sufficient for itself; there lay concealed in it a germ of saddest corruption and disorder, a germ

which the first sin had already rendered in the highest degree prolific. The overweening confidence, therefore, of finding peace in self or in other creatures, even if it were not imputable as a fault *(culpa)* to the descendant of Adam himself, because he inherits it necessarily, would be none the less a true disorder, and a source of continual torment, inasmuch as he would unceasingly strive after happiness, and as unceasingly find himself disappointed.

247. Let us now consider how wisely and how justly God acted in permitting that temporal evils should propagate themselves from the first parent to his descendants. For my own part, I have no doubt that the mere fact of man's soul being deprived—most justly deprived—of the supernatural aid we have spoken of, sufficed to prostrate his energies, already disordered by sin, and to dispossess him, to a large extent, of the dominion over his body, which was kept alive by the vigour of a soul joined in friendship and close union with life's very fountain. The first chapter of Genesis represents God as making Himself, so to speak, part of the universe, and, under some natural and visible form, delighting in His creatures and presiding over their government. Now, I believe that in consequence of God's withdrawing from nature when the ties which united Him with it and which entered into the general plan were snapped asunder, nature remained as it were without its soul, barren, saddened, a prey to all the evils expressed in the divine maledictions. Be that however, as it may, it is enough for us to understand that human nature, deprived of the friendship of its Author, even though still possessed of its essential constitutives, carries with it necessarily a germ of dis-

order and of woes which affect and corrupt even its moral element. The ultimate effect of the development of so sad a germ can only be misery and despair, since man never finds what he seeks, but finds at last in all things vexation of mind.

Now, since the disorder and the evil bent of the will which constitutes original sin cannot be laid to the charge of the descendants of Adam, because it does not depend on their own free or personal will, there is no need, for the validity of our argument, of regarding temporal ills and sufferings as *personal* penalties. But as the former may be taken as a fact belonging to the moral order, proceeding, however, from the limitation of human nature and its liability to fail, so the latter may be taken as a consequence of the former, a consequence founded on the connexion of the spiritual and moral with the physical order.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PERMISSION OF TEMPORAL EVILS WHICH ARE COMMON TO GOOD AND BAD ALIKE, IS NOT MERELY AN ACT OF JUSTICE, BUT ALSO AN EFFECT OF GOODNESS; FOR THEY SERVE AS A WHOLESOME REMEDY TO THE MORAL INFIRMITIES COMMON TO ALL MEN.

248. That he who seeks happiness where it cannot be found should be doomed to disappointment, is not only just, not only necessary, but also an ordinance prompted by goodness and love.

Suppose that it were possible for man to find happiness in himself or in the objects around him, or at least that God had intervened to diminish in large measure the sufferings man has to endure in seeking to compass his end by these tortuous and troublesome ways—and God could not have done so without working a miracle—would this be for man's advantage? By no means. The more trouble and pain man finds in himself or in other creatures, the less inclined is he to place his confidence and his affections in these things. On the other hand, the greater and more varied are the delectations he succeeds in deriving from creatures, so much the more does the disorder, I mean, the absurd hope of finding full contentment without God, grow in him; and so he goes on farther and farther away from God. The germ

of the disorder, therefore, which human nature left by God to itself contains, would grow more and more mischievous, until at last it brought down upon it greater miseries from that necessity of justice which makes straight all that is crooked, and compels every disordered thing to re-enter into order, that is to say, by rendering this human nature a torment to itself in proportion as it has taken greater delight in fornicating with created things, to use a Scripture phrase, in defiance of its God. Obviously, then, the ordeal of the sufferings and calamities which man experiences in this life, is not only a just penalty of the first sin and a consequence of his natural limitation, which begets disorder, and, through disorder, pain; but also a protection and a barrier against the impetus of this furious nature, which does not suffice for itself, and yet is perpetually dreaming of its own self-sufficiency.

249. When, however, we turn our attention to the grace brought into the world by JESUS CHRIST, we then see that a new supernatural aid, more excellent than the first, is offered to the spirit of man, who can through it be reunited with God. God has, of His own free Goodness, come to the rescue of human nature. Taught by a sad experience the futility of all attempts to find the much-coveted peace in anything within this creation, he turns back from his wanderings, and eagerly casts himself into the bosom of his generous Divine Lover, drawing thence a new and inexhaustible spiritual vigour. Then do the disappointments and sufferings of this life become for him a means, not only of putting a check to his irregularities, but also of bringing him back to his true rest, and he sees in

them the goodness of God shining forth with increased brilliancy.

250. Hence, again, the utter unreasonableness of any complaint with respect to temporal afflictions. We all come into the world in an attitude of aversion from God, with a limitation in our nature which causes disorder in the will; and this disorder entails various sufferings. The law which imposes suffering on us is, therefore, natural and just, because common to all who are morally tainted. It is also good, because it goes counter to our natural disorder, and, so far as it can, corrects it, and because the obstruction of the ills against which our disordered nature has to contend helps us, through JESUS CHRIST, to turn back, and admonishes us to return without delay to that God Who once more comes forward inviting us to His embraces.

251. It is true that JESUS CHRIST, in redeeming and saving man, has thought fit to confine man's restoration, in the first instance, to his *person*, leaving his *nature* still infirm and subject to death, which destroys it, until the time of the Resurrection, when our Lord will regenerate it entirely. This economy in human justification and restoration was chosen by God for exalted reasons. Several of the reasons it is possible for us to know, and one has just been touched upon.

252. Were it, however, impossible for us to know any of them, should we have the audacity to dictate to God even in the matter of His liberality, or pretend that His Goodness, which comes to the relief of our miseries spontaneously and without the least right on our part, must proceed in the way which we choose to lay down for it and in no other? In remedying the disorder of our nature, is not God free to do so in the

degree He judges best, whether wholly or in part? If, then, He were to think proper whilst leaving us subject to temporal evils to save us from those of eternity, ought not our gratitude to our merciful Deliverer to be unspeakably great? What monstrous ingratitude! God loads lost man with His benefits, and in return is summoned by him to judgment!

253. Again, temporal calamities and sufferings were, in the first place, left to fallen man as a remedy against his deeply-rooted moral malady—that presumptuous sentiment of the capabilities of his nature separated from God by sin, which identifies itself with pride, and which is a prolific source of concupiscence. Only by a long course of severe afflictions and bitter disappointments could such a malady be cured. Only by this means, accompanied with the light of grace, could man be brought to see the absolute nullity of himself as well as of other creatures in regard to his true contentment, and so be made at last to turn to God, and in the words of the penitent St. Augustine exclaim: "Truly Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts can have no rest until they repose in Thee!" If man had not had the galling experience of misfortune, he might perhaps have found peace in God, but he could never have felt, or felt so deeply, not only that his peace is in God, but that it is nowhere else, and that his intellective nature, which all other natures serve, can find its happiness in no created thing.

254. The materials of human reasoning are furnished to the understanding by the senses (55-58). Hence, sensible experience was necessary in order to prove to man that his nature stood in continual need of his Creator, to give him a fuller knowledge of God's

perfection and of his own imperfection. In a word, this experience was necessary, in order that man's intelligence and his very senses humbled under the mighty hand of God might discern the glory of the Most High in triumphing over all created things. But it is precisely in the vivid perception of this glory that man's great chance of salvation lies; since the more deeply the splendour of God's glory or power penetrates into his soul, the more abundant is the grace he receives.

If, therefore, human cognitions start from sense, and sense has need of experience, how could God have led man to so perfect a knowledge, without at the same time leaving him to experience both the ills inherent to his fallen nature, and his own infirmity? How could man, without this, have arrived at so intense a conviction of his own nothingness and of the Divine Greatness, and, by consequence, have been raised to his present lofty eminence of grace and bliss? Was it fitting that God should instruct His creatures by setting aside the laws ordained for that very purpose by Himself? Or rather, could He have done so? Can a stone be set in motion save by a force overcoming its inertia? Or can a sensation be produced in the animal except by a sensible thing acting upon it? Or can a being operate otherwise than through the use of its powers or faculties? Must God, then, prevent by miracles those ills, the experience of which alone could disabuse of his fatal errors this compound of mind and body called man?

See, therefore, the wisdom and the goodness of God! He has left to man temporal evils, all of them of man's making, that man might thereby attain the highest

moral perfection and the greatest bliss. And is it not strange that a Christian should not understand what even Plato, by gathering up the remnants of the original traditions, understood very well, as we may see from the following passage in the *Critias:* "The God of Gods, seeing that men had lost the most excellent among things most precious, decreed to subject them to such treatment as might have the effect of at once punishing and regenerating them"? Indeed this truth, so expressed by the Athenian Philosopher, would be quite enough to dissipate the difficulties that are urged against the apportionment of temporal evils. For, considering, on the one hand, that the defective state of man's nature renders him liable to all those evils, and, on the other, that these evils, through the strength infused into him by the grace of the Redeemer, serve as a cure for his deadly moral disease, we arrive at the conclusion, that whilst those persons who happen to have comparatively less to endure may, from a natural point of view, congratulate themselves on this fact as on an accidental stroke of good fortune, the others, who are more severely tried, may justly see in their hardships a supernatural Divine mercy.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE POWER OF PRAYER IS A MEANS OFFERED TO US BY CHRIST FOR REMOVING ALL IRREGULARITIES IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF TEMPORAL EVIL.

255. But there are many who do not consider, or at least do not always consider, this original imperfection of their nature—this sin which we all carry with us, this continual propensity to presume extravagantly on our capabilities and those of corporeal things, a presumption, the keen habitual feeling of which, isolated from reliance on the Creator, may be defined as *instinctive pride*. Hence their complaints about temporal good and evil not being equitably apportioned according to personal merit and demerit, or according to those virtues and vices which are called actual, that is to say, which are not simply inherited, but which are attributable to the free action of the individual himself. This, it seems to them, ought to be the ruling principle of the distribution. Now, I do not wish to oppose them on the score of their inattention. Neither am I so sanguine as to expect that the fact of our original disorder will be accepted by all as being by itself alone a sufficient explanation of the common ills. As I have before observed, that strength of mind which is necessary for dispelling, through the constant use and application of a single general principle, all the objections that

can be raised against a given truth, belongs only to a few. I will therefore, instead, try to succour, if possible, the intellectual weakness of these complainants by calling their attention to other considerations of a more proximate and less general kind.

256. We have already noticed the connexion existing between the events of the universe (238—240); and we have seen that the universal course of things, and hence the distribution of temporal good and evil, depend altogether on the original positions of the several beings and on their first movements, all determined alike by Divine Wisdom. We have also observed how it would be a task far transcending all the powers of human intelligence to form a direct judgment as to the wisdom, or otherwise, of those positions and movements. After this, we went on to consider that the best of all the positions in question could not have been that which would result in saving all the just from all temporal suffering, but must be that from which the just would have as little to suffer as possible, while at the same time as few as possible of the unjust were allowed to escape the penalties due to them. And when I say *the just*, I of course abstract from the original disorder of our nature, and from the unavoidable actual effects of that disorder, as well as from those minor failings to which even those who share in Christ's sanctifying grace are, generally speaking, subject by reason of their frailty: and all these abstractions render my argument all the stronger.

Even though we were not authorized to affirm without proof that the universe as disposed by God in the beginning tended to favour virtue, and in the long run to punish vice to the fullest extent, and though the

very notion of God forbids us to doubt it, yet the teaching of Christianity, which is wont to answer the most arduous questions, furnishes us with a higher light that corroborates the conclusions at which reason itself arrives. For our Divine Master assures us that the Heavenly Father watches with peculiar love over the just, takes them under His special protection, and showers down on them profusely His benedictions. Moreover, He has placed among the dogmas of our faith this most consoling truth, *That prayer offered in the name of the Mediator obtains whatever it asks.* (1) Now, it is very seldom that those who pray ask for miracles. It follows that according to Christian philosophy many temporal blessings may be obtained by prayer without a miracle being at all necessary. But this truth implies another, namely, that God, when determining in the beginning the order of the events which were to follow in succession, foresaw all the prayers and desires of the just, (I say *desires*, because whatever things the just desire, they ask the same of God, on whom their hearts are ever fixed; indeed, sometimes their desire is equivalent to a prayer;) and, with this provision, He so predisposed things that those prayers should be answered in the natural course of events—answered, that is to say, by His granting either the very blessing which was asked, or else a greater one; and always in such a manner that, whichever of the two was granted, it should be made to accord with the universal good. The knowledge we have of the first of these truths is our guarantee for the certainty of the second.

It is also a tenet of Christian Faith, that under

(1) Jo. xiv. 13, 14.

the system of Redemption there can be no truly virtuous life save through the grace of JESUS CHRIST, which begets prayer.

But prayer, while itself the effect of grace, is, in its turn, the means of grace.

Consequently, prayer, as at once the effect and the means, becomes the measure of grace; and if of grace, therefore of virtue. Thus we may say that in the Christian system, virtue and prayer form an equation.

But we have said that prayer, offered in the name of the Mediator, obtains whatever it asks.

The plain outcome, therefore, of all this is, that "All blessings are apportioned according to the measure of virtue for the very reason that they are apportioned according to the measure of prayer."

CHAPTER XV.

IF WE CONSIDER ONLY THE NATURAL LAW, APART FROM THE POSITIVE PROMISES OF GOD, WE CANNOT PROVE THAT TEMPORAL EVIL MUST BE DISTRIBUTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH VIRTUE AND WITH VICE.

257. But now we shall do well to examine more closely the claims of that virtue which complains of not being fairly treated. And in the first place, let us try to ascertain its true character, and see if it be really entitled to the name of virtue; for indeed it is by no means an unfrequent thing in this matter to hear that vaunted as a reality which is only an empty appearance. Discriminating, therefore, true from false virtue, let us see to which of the two kinds this presumptuous and querulous virtue ought to be referred —whether to the true and sterling, or to the artificial counterfeit; and again, what virtue has more merit, that which modestly holds its peace, or that which arrogantly fills the air with lamentations.

258. First of all, let us recall to mind the very wide difference between virtue of the natural order and virtue of the supernatural order.

259. Supernatural virtue, considered only in its external characteristics, differs from the natural by the quality of the law which it follows, and by the promises which sanction that law. The law it follows is positive, that is, imposed by an act of authority, the authority of God Himself. The promises made to those who

observe it are likewise positive, explicit, solemn. The law which directs natural virtue, on the other hand, is known only through the light of reason, and can shew no sanction whatever in the form of positive promises.

I shall not delay to inquire whether this human reason, which presumes so much on itself, can point to a single truth discovered by its own powers alone, and whether therefore it can justly lay claim to being called the promulgator of any legislation; or rather, whether all that enlightenment of which it is nowadays so vain-glorious, is not, when we trace it to its origin, to be attributed in reality to those positive instructions which, together with language, were imparted to man by the Creator in the beginning, and from which our first progenitors received the impulse to the free use of their reason, as well as the germs of all human wisdom—germs which were afterwards transmitted by the heads of families to their sadly forgetful descendants (99—114). Indeed, this is my belief, and I very much incline to the opinion of those who deplore the blindness of human pride in taking to itself, by an act of sacrilegious robbery, the glory which belongs to Him Who, in the words of Holy Writ, is the "Only Master" and the "Only Wise." (1) Leaving aside,

(1) The meaning which I attach to the phrase, *Light of natural Reason*, may be gathered from what was said in the first Book, Chap. xix. I there distinguish three classes of things proposed to man's knowledge by God: *First*, natural objects; *Second*, God Himself and all that relates to man's supernatural end; *Third*, language and with it the principles of reasoning. Now, this third thing, which is the means of human reasoning, when applied to the first class of things, gives what may be called *natural reasoning;* and when applied to the second class of things, it gives what may be called *supernatural reasoning*.

however, the inquiry as to whence those lights originally came, and taking them merely as I find them, I very willingly recognize in the same the firm foundations of the moral legislation. And since they manifest themselves to us, not as the mere intimations of a sovereign will, but as consequences of rational principles shining with an eternal truth, I shall give this legislation the name of *natural*, and shall from the observance of it draw the concept of natural virtue.

260. I admit, then, a natural virtue: but how uncertain is it in its commands! How timid and hesitating its voice in difficult encounters! Its law is a law inspired by sentiment rather than intimated by reflection. It is not indeed that this noble moral sentiment, which never dies within us, is devoid of light, or does not reveal itself as intimately conjoined with a function of reason, the intellectual preceptions of beings. (1) Nor again is it that this same feeling, which suggests to us so high a respect for all endowed with intelligence and free-will, which sweetly inclines us to love our fellow creatures, to share with them the good things in which we abound, and sometimes to forget ourselves for their sake—and all this, without hope of any other recompense than the delight of thinking that we have been instrumental in assuaging sorrow or relieving distress—is not good, right, and helpful to the cause of virtue. Nevertheless, this feeling and that lofty abstract idea of virtue which reflection is able to draw therefrom do not exert upon human reason—enfeebled as it is and easily

(1) For an explanation of how the intellectual perception of beings assumes the force of moral law of greater or less extension, see the Author's *Treatise on Conscience* ("Trattato della Coscienza Morale"), Bk. ii. nn. 123–125; 131–134; 157–200.—*Tr.*

seduced—a force so powerful and so constant that man may not, when sorely exercised, either disown them or doubt the legitimacy of their authority. But if in those trying moments the Divine Legislator presents Himself to him, and says: "Be of good heart, listen with perfect confidence to the voice which speaks within thee; that voice comes from Me;" after receiving such an assurance as this, man can no longer deny assent to the law which he feels to be written in his heart, without being in the highest degree to blame. The authority of that recondite law becomes clear and fully authenticated. The voice is a voice whose origin can no longer be unknown or doubted. The Legislator has drawn aside the veil behind which he was hidden; it is Himself that is seen, and in the observance or violation of the law it is Himself that is openly honoured or outraged.

261. The law of natural moral good, therefore, when considered as the manifestation of God's will to man, acquires an unmistakable evidence and an authority which is infinite. For this reason God, as we have seen (nn. 104, 108, 114), never left the world wholly unprovided with such traditions as would assist men to lift their minds even to Himself; and those among the Gentiles who specially applied themselves to the study of wisdom were condemned, because, according to the expression of the Apostle, "they held the truth of God in injustice." For they knew the divine existence and attributes, inasmuch as God had manifested the same to them by endowing them with an intelligence which, illumined and fertilized by the traditions originated by Himself, might from visible things rise up to the conception of invisible ones, namely of His Divi-

nity and Sovereign Power.(1) On the other hand, weak indeed were the foundations laid for morality by those who, abandoning the traditional truths, shut themselves up within the narrow circle of the knowledge attained by reason alone; but not even these could they have laid, had it been possible for them to abandon also whatever knowledge they had received from intercourse with human society. It is to this uncertainty, this feebleness of the natural law as taught by human reason alone, as also to the impressions of sensible things, whose voice unceasingly insinuates lying doctrines, and discredits virtue as a mere illusion of the fancy, that we owe the fact, as deplorable as it is universal, of there being such an abundance of ethical philosophy in the books and on the ostentatious tongues of pretenders to human wisdom, but such a lack of it in their lives and actions. Some conspicuous deed, and that more famed than virtuous, they think sufficient to entitle them to be called virtuous men, and perhaps to cover the crimes of heaven knows how many years, or certainly the daily infractions of this same moral law, a law so severe, that one single act committed against it is enough to deprive a man of the right to the title of "guiltless," which, after all, is only the lowest degree of virtue. If, therefore, there is any one who believes himself to be in every respect a virtuous man, let such a one come forward and protest against the unfairness of the present distribution of the ills of this life: but before doing so, let him prove, if he can, his entire freedom from guilt; let him prove it at least to himself in one of those fugitive moments, when his heart, in the stillness of solitude, dares calmly and dispassion-

(1) Rom. Ch. I.

ately to look truth in the face and listen to its voice.

262. But now the question arises: To whom will this wonderful being, this portent among men, address his protest, his complaints? Who was his legislator? What was the sanction of the law which, as is here supposed, he has magnanimously observed against all the most terrible odds? These questions, alas! he cannot answer. He cannot find any legislator, or know of any, because none has manifested himself. The law which he has so fully obeyed was intimated to him by his own reason, which, as soon as it has enunciated the law, owns itself powerless to either reward or punish, nay, declares its whole and sole office to consist merely in indicating what is right, and presenting it as so absolute, so necessary, that its binding force stands altogether apart from any hope of recompense or any fear of chastisement. The light of natural reason in promulgating the law peremptorily summons man to obey, and there the matter ends. It is true that in point of fact the consequence of man's obedience to the law of reason is tranquillity, and that of disobedience remorse; but this very tranquillity and this remorse, when carefully looked into, are found to be nothing else than the same voice which intimates the law. For that voice takes a different tone according to the quality of the response which man makes to it by his actions; the tone of approbation if he obeys the summons, and of reproach if he disobeys. Obedience to its precepts is all that this law cares for. Consequences are nothing to it. In its eyes, man's physical good and physical evil are just as if they did not exist.

The reason why no connexion can be discovered

between the moral law as proclaimed by reason alone, and anything in the shape of sensible reward or sensible punishment, is very plain. The moral law, being received purely by the intelligence and proposed unconditionally to man's free-will, does not concern itself nor mix itself up with what belongs to the sphere of the senses, a sphere far beneath its own. The two essences, the sensible, and the intelligible and moral, are incommunicable, mysteriously conjoined, it is true, in the unity of the human subject, but neither confounded nor assimilated. The moral essence promises nothing, desires nothing, gives nothing of that which is sensible; even as the sensible essence cannot aspire to any of the delights of the intelligible, which in regard to it have no existence. Hence, for this wonderful twofold being called man to complain because his sensitive nature derives no pleasure from the merits of his intelligent nature, or to be scandalized at finding that the former suffers while the latter seems deserving of reward, is a preposterous thing. The only reward to which he is entitled, consists in the testimony of a good conscience, and this never fails him, being, as we have said, the natural and necessary consequence of the practice of virtue. To pretend that he who complies with the law of his own nature should be rewarded with sensible enjoyment, and he who violates it, punished with sensible suffering, is well nigh as unreasonable as it would be to demand that the retribution due to the merits or demerits acquired by one man should be given to another man, or rather, to speak more correctly, to a being of another nature, to demand, for example, that the horse should be rewarded or punished for the valour or cowardice of its rider.

Apart, then, from God, there is no sufficient reason why virtue should rely on receiving any other recompense than the testimony of a good conscience.

263. The case is different when the moral law emanating from the natural light of reason is positively promulgated by an external legislator. It may then happen that he accompany his promulgation with large promises, and it would become him well: this would be the effect of his liberality, and of his supreme bounty. But were he, in addition to the natural law, to impose other positive precepts, differing not only in the manner but in the substance of the promulgation, then alone would promises like these be by a certain equity demanded. (1)

264. Wherefore, when man, wishing as it were to sunder himself from God, restricts himself to his natural reason only, he forfeits all claim to positive promises. By so doing, he in reality removes mind from nature, even as he removes light from reason. What do I mean by this? I mean that then reason and nature are, for him, nothing but a fact. He can require nothing from either of them. He constitutes himself a hearer of what reason says, a

(1) Hence the feeling, so universal and so deeply rooted in mankind, that the practice of virtue must be followed by positive rewards, proves that the moral law was received from an external legislator, Who once spoke to man, or at least, that it was derived from the notion of a supreme Legislator. If men had derived the moral law from the light of their reason alone, quite apart from the thought of a being who was Sovereign Lord of all, they never could have harboured within themselves such an expectation or have been so strongly impressed with the certainty that a distinct and condign reward would follow a virtuous life, that it is now difficult to persuade them that this feeling is not a natural suggestion of their reason itself. A similar thing has happened in regard to many other truths, which, to use the expression of a learned writer, are not *natural* to, but *naturalized* in man.

spectator of what takes place in nature: that is all. He hears reason and feels the force of its commands without knowing their result. He does not ask what is the true foundation of those commands, and yet they present themselves as none the less absolute, none the less inexorable. He sees the spectacle of nature, and feels that he is himself a factor in it, indeed a spectacle, perhaps a cruel spectacle, but of a cruelty which, like all facts, cannot be helped, from which he cannot appeal even as he cannot cry for mercy or pity. Such is reason, such is nature considered in itself, sundered from God. The first merely commands, the second merely acts. The command of the first knows of no indulgence, of no hope; the action of the second is blind, and order cannot be demanded of it as a thing which it ought to have, but can only be sought as a fact which it presents to the observer.

265. It is true that, on observing this fact in nature, a man may, even by means of reason alone, rise to the knowledge of the existence of a Supreme Mind. But how will that existence be recognized by him who in the same fact sees everything but order, who seems to himself to see irregularities rife on every side—no discrimination made between the good and the bad, or, worse still, the good oppressed and the bad exalted? Noble indeed and magnanimous must be the conscience of that man, who in the face of this can frankly say to himself: "Ah no, it cannot be! A conflict, a contradiction between the two orders, of nature and of reason, is what I cannot admit. I will rather believe that these orders will certainly be reconciled in a future life. To this consoling belief will I ever cling. It is good, and for me

the good will be the proof of the true." And yet, what does even this courageous effort of the human spirit lead to after all? Not to looking for order between virtue and happiness in this life, but only to expecting it beyond the grave.

Once more, then, it is unreasonable, it is foolish in a man to complain because, although a follower of natural virtue, he has a troubled existence.

266. Nevertheless, the man who rejects the positive revelation of Christianity, and undertakes to investigate his own nature and that of the universe which surrounds him by the mere light of reason, can only consider both as facts; as he cannot demand that they be subject to some law which he conceives good and wise, but only observe and from his observation argue the laws of the universe. Let us investigate together with him by observing the facts, according to what law good and evil are distributed on earth. Let us see, that is, if the virtuous and the wicked share them indifferently; or if the distribution varies in such wise as to justify us in affirming that the good are constantly more favoured than the wicked, or the wicked, on the contrary, more prosperous than the good.

CHAPTER XVI.

OBSERVATION SHOWS THAT TEMPORAL GOOD HAS A CONTINUAL TENDENCY TO BE UNITED WITH VIRTUE, AND TEMPORAL EVIL, GENERALLY SPEAKING, TO FOLLOW VICE.

267. If even on this earth we find that in the succession of events a certain order of goodness and of justice is maintained, we shall be authorized to infer from it the existence of that Creator Whom we have, for argument's sake, seemed for a while to ignore.

268. But first of all, we see, or believe that we see, that this order is not perfect, namely, not without irregularities. Is it not evident that not every vicious act is instantly punished, nor every virtuous act instantly rewarded? To be convinced of this, we have but to glance at this sun of ours shining daily upon hideous villanies stalking the earth with head erect, whilst merit of the highest order meets with nothing but adversity. This, however, does not necessarily mean that there is no order of justice, or that there is not that order which there ought to be, and which is the only one that can be expected.

269. We have already seen that it would be altogether unreasonable to affirm the possibility of such a combination of the beings forming the universe, such a concourse of events, as would result in saving all the

virtuous from temporal suffering and letting none of the vicious escape therefrom. We must not therefore imagine that our observation of facts will reveal the existence of a perfect order, of a perfect accord between merit and enjoyment, demerit and misery. Yet it will at once be a source of relief to us, and reason enough for dispelling all doubts and disposing us to believe in a Sovereign Mind governing the world wisely and well, if we find that, in general, the vicious are temporally punished and the virtuous rewarded.

270. In fact, death and all those ills to which every human being without exception is inevitably subject, are due to the limitation of our nature separated from its Maker. Consequently, it would be absurd to expect protection against these ills from nature or from natural virtue. It remains, then, that the accord between virtue and vice, and temporal good and evil, cannot justly be looked for in regard to common and necessary ills, but only in regard to such as depend on accidental circumstances.

Among accidental goods, the first is tranquillity of heart; and we have seen that this natural reward never fails a man who practises that virtue which consists in conforming himself to the dictates of the moral law as manifested to him by the light of reason, and thus paying homage to the Divinity, which, without his knowing it, lies hidden, so to speak, within that law.

271. To this many other wholesome results must be added; for the beings whom man has to deal with in this life, and to whom his applications of the dictates of the natural law may refer are his fellow creatures and himself.

Now, it will not be difficult to perceive, that he who faithfully observes the rules of morality in regard both to his fellow creatures and to himself, is more likely (other things being equal) to secure temporal good and escape temporal evil, than he who does the reverse.

272. For, good moral behaviour towards one's fellow creatures consists in being so disposed as sincerely to wish well to all, and in showing this by deeds; whereas vice consists in forgetting the consideration which is due to others, and thinking only of oneself. Now, he who is known as a true well-wisher to all, is, by general consent, preferred to him who is known as a grovelling self-seeking creature. He has, therefore, the majority of votes in his favour, and hence the greater probability of obtaining this life's advantages. There will be against him the interests of each; but each, in regard to his own interests, finds himself alone; and so he is overmatched by the power of all. True, he may have to compete with some who simulate the same virtue; but the simulation of virtue can be neither so frequent, nor so constant, nor so sure of itself, as genuine virtue is. Although, therefore, it may happen that the honest lover of the common weal is overcome by interested passions combined against him from accidental causes, yet this must be a less frequent, because a less probable occurrence.

273. Here we must consider that cases of irregularity, although comparatively very rare, make a greater impression than those which proceed in accordance with the nature and requirements of things. Hence the notion that irregularities are very frequent, is an entirely mistaken notion, founded, not

upon calm calculation, but rather upon the disgust one feels at seeing a wicked man exalted. And this very disgust proves that that is a thing against nature, and, consequently, less frequent than its opposite; since that which goes against nature happens very seldom, and that which proceeds according to nature is the standing rule. It likewise proves that men are just in judging of the cause of their neighbours, unjust only when they judge of their own cause. This is why in the world the judgments passed on the external merit of individuals, are, for the greater part, correct, and why the votes given in judgments regarding others exceed in number those given in judgments regarding oneself, in fact, exceed nearly by as much as is the number of judgers multiplied by itself.

274. Some might perhaps doubt the soundness of my contention, that virtue enjoys a greater probability of obtaining this life's advantages, because I have made that probability depend on the condition "other things being equal." And I do not deny that, if it were to happen that the enemies of a virtuous man had greater power than he, they would certainly prevail against him. But it must be remembered that my question is: "How is temporal good more likely to be distributed among men," and, among the items of this good, that very power the abuse of which is here deplored. I am therefore supposing the good as not yet distributed, and am enquiring according to what law it continually and naturally tends to distribute itself. Now, I maintain that this law is the following:—

TEMPORAL GOOD HAS A CONTINUAL TENDENCY TO FOLLOW NATURAL VIRTUE, AND TEMPORAL EVIL TO FOLLOW VICE.

275. In whatever state the world may find itself, however irregularly temporal good may seem to be distributed, the tendency I speak of never ceases to be in operation; it always remains true that this kind of good continually tends to unite itself to virtue. Thus, even when a body is at rest, it is none the less on that account attracted to the centre of the earth. This means that temporal good in its various forms, if not at once distributed in the regular order, must continually move in that direction. The perfection of the equilibrium between virtue and well-being, or certainly the drifting of events towards that perfection, no matter how interfered with by accidental disturbances, must ever go on approaching nearer and nearer its full consummation.

276. The better to understand this, let the reader give a moment's attention to the *Law of Probability*, a sovereign law presiding over the application of all the other laws of the universe and shaping their modes of action, as will be shown in a Treatise on Cosmology which, God willing, I intend to publish, if I may cherish the hope that studies of this kind will find favour and encouragement in Italy. (1)

277. If you put into a bag 90 little balls of ivory, all of the same size, one sixth of them yellow, two sixths red, and three sixths black, and then draw them out one at a time at haphazard, there is no certainty that one colour will come out first rather than another, but there is probability in the proportions of one half for the black, one third for the red, and one sixth for

(1) This was written in 1825. The Author afterwards treated of the subject of Cosmology in several of his works, but especially in the "Teosofia."—*Tr.*

the yellow. Whichever colour you happen to extract is always an irregularity, because that colour had not, so to speak, an entire right to come out, but only half a right, or a third, or a sixth part. But if, replacing the ball after each extraction, you go on repeating the same operation a very great number of times, you will find that the number of balls for each colour comes nearer and nearer to the relative proportions in respect of the colours. And the longer you continue, the more will the irregularity diminish, and the normal design become more apparent; thus clearly showing you, that the law which inclines the colours to regularize themselves, although accidentally disturbed in its action, would entirely prevail if you were to prolong the extractions to an indefinite length of time.

Agreeably to this, he who can only consider particular cases, is not in a position to be able to realize to himself the marvellous beauty of this universe; nay, in noticing the irregularities which are inevitable in it, he must take them as so many evidences of deformity; whereas he who considers a long series of events will see therein an admirably regular and symmetrical order. Thus, if a man, seeing a fine piece of embroidery were to examine each stitch or thread apart from the rest, he would see one colour after the other, but not the beauty of the whole. Duly to appreciate this, he must look at the piece from a certain distance, and take in at a glance the harmonious effect of all the colours, to each of which the cunning hand of the embroiderer has assigned its own proper place. Hence we may conclude:—

In the application of the laws of the universe, the great Artificer has disposed that there should be irregularities

in particular instances, and regularity in the whole, making the very irregularities serve for the accomplishment of His grand eternal design.

278. This, too, is what comes to pass in the apportionment of temporal good and evil. If you see a virtuous man in distress think that that is only one case. Look at his entire life, and you will probably find that his prosperity has been far in excess of his adversities. And if you should not be able to see the law of order fulfilled by considering the life of a single person, extend your consideration to whole families. You will then discover that those have been more prosperous who have been more virtuous. Again, the irregularities observable in families taken singly, will much diminish in your eyes, if, instead of only one family, you consider many; and still more, if you consider whole nations. The history of these is there to tell us as a constant fact, that while virtue stood high among them, they flourished, but in proportion as they sank deeper and deeper in moral degradation, they went on decaying until they perished. Yet fewer will the irregularities appear to you, if you survey the entire history of virtue and vice in all mankind, and the diminution will be the more marked the longer are the periods in which you undertake to examine it.

279. To illustrate what I say by a single example (for the brevity I have proposed to myself will not allow of more), I invite you to reflect how sometimes that seems to be an irregularity which contributes in a very high degree to the general regularity. It is a simple fact, observed in all times, that certain dispositions, vicious as well as virtuous, are propagated from

parent to offspring. This is, in great part, the reason why different races exhibit different temperaments, peculiarities in their modes of thinking, and in their habits and manners. By bearing this in mind, you will readily perceive how hereditary maladies, which appear to be irregularities, may be the means of fulfilling a wise providential purpose. The sins of the parents, punished with disease, are punished in the same way in their children, because the latter inherit the inclination to the same sins. Add to this the domestic education and example, which materially contribute to strengthen in the children the vicious impress left in them by the parents through generation, and therefore to increase the probability of their committing those same sins, and as a general result, to multiply them. It was every way fitting that races morally so vitiated, should be afflicted with greater corporal evils, to the end that they might be extinguished sooner than those that are incorrupt, and so virtue might always be seen at last to have won the day. (1)

(1) This subject has been treated also by La Place in his "Philosophical Essay on Probability," where he writes: "On y verra sans doute avec intérêt, qu'en ne considérant même dans les principes éternels de la raison, de la justice et de l'humanité, que les chances heureuses qui leur sont constamment attachées, il y a un grand avantage à suivre les principes, et de graves inconvéniens à s'en écarter. Leurs chances, comme celles qui sont favorables aux lotteries, finissent toujours par prévaloir au milieu des oscillations du hazard. Je désire que les réflexions répandues dans cet essai, puissent mériter l'attention des philosophes, et la diriger vers un object si digne de les occuper."

CHAPTER XVII.

DIVINE JUSTICE SOMETIMES DELAYS THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED IN THE INTEREST OF VIRTUE, AND THEREBY JUSTIFIES THE DELAY.

280. I cannot here refrain from inserting an observation, as sagacious as it is true, which we find in a book of Plutarch entitled: "Why Divine Justice sometimes delays the punishment of wicked men."

He says that God does not instantly punish crime, because He views things, not separately, but in their aggregate; He looks not so much at what each human action taken singly would demand, as at what will best promote the realization of a perfect order of justice combined with goodness in the course of men's lives taken as a whole. Now, how often do we see wicked men abandoning their evil courses, and then advancing in virtue, far more perhaps than they had done in vice. Were God to smite these men with death the very moment they commit the first sin, there would not, it is true, be the particular irregularity by which that sin does, for a season, escape punishment; but there would also be the loss of that grand order to which such irregularity gives rise. For in the cases in question, the claims of justice are satisfied in the lives of these men taken as a whole, with great advantage to them, and with an increase of glory to the Divine Clemency, as well as an increase in the sum total of the virtue attained by mankind at large.

281. The Greek philosopher confirms this sage observation of his in the following words: "Great characters produce nothing that is not great. And since their energy is too vigorous to remain idle, like ships tossed about by the billows and the storms, they are ever in a state of agitation until they have come to form well-settled habits. Now, as a man who knows nothing of agriculture looks contemptuously upon a plot of land which he sees covered with brambles, wild herbs, stagnant water, reptiles, and the like, whereas an expert husbandman will perhaps see in these very things a clear proof of the fertility of the soil; so is it with great characters. They are, in the beginning of their career, liable to go astray into very vicious and perverse ways; and we, feeling indignant at this, imagine that men of such ill promise ought at once to be exterminated from the face of the earth. But He Who understands the art of human cultivation better than we do, seeing how much that is good and generous there is in these same men, waits patiently for the season of wisdom and virtue, when their robust temperaments will bear fruit worthy of themselves."

282. In accordance with this wise view, Plutarch compares the principle followed in the case now under consideration to the law of the Egyptians which ordained, that "If a woman with child happened to be sentenced to death, the execution of the sentence should be put off till after child-birth." Many a wicked man, observes our Philosopher, is in a position similar to that of this woman, deserving of death, and perhaps already condemned by God; but there lurks within him some noble action, some magnanimous deed. It belongs to the Wisdom, therefore, no less

than to the Goodness of God to delay his punishment for awhile, that he may have time to yield that excellent fruit of virtue which is secretly being matured within him.

283. Even if this were not a fruit of true virtue—in which case the man would be supposed not to be reformed, and consequently incapable of spontaneously making full compensation for what he has by his evil conduct detracted from Divine Justice—would not the same reasoning hold in the event of such fruit being of advantage to others? Ought not our all-wise and all-perfect God still to suspend that man's punishment, supposing that He had destined him, even against his will and without his knowing it, to render some great service to the world at large?

"If Dionysius the tyrant," (the same author continues,) "had been punished at the very instant of his usurpation, there would not perhaps have been a single Greek left in Sicily; for the Carthaginians, possessing themselves of that country would have banished them all. The same thing would have happened to the city of Apollonia, and to that of Anatorium, and, probably, to the whole island of Leucadia, if Periander's punishment had not been delayed till long after his usurpation of sovereignty over those places. And for my own part, I have no doubt that Cassander's punishment was put off for no other motive than that he might serve as the means of rebuilding and repeopling Thebes."

284. Then he passes to speak of the use which God makes of tyrants for punishing the crimes of peoples; the tyrants themselves being, for reasons worthy of His Greatness and His Clemency, reserved for punishment at the end of their mission—a luminous truth,

of which the history of all ages affords manifest proofs. As instances in point, he cites Phalaris in the case of the Agrigentines, and Marius in that of the Romans; but it would not be difficult to substitute for those ancient examples many others of recent date, and certainly not less solemn. Or rather, it would be useless to do so, since the world seems to have hardly recovered as yet from the shock it felt at those which have occurred within our own generation. (1)

285. Here it is a satisfaction to me to note how the principles laid down above agree with the wise observations of this Greek Philosopher. Let me sum up those principles in the form of questions and answers:—

Q. Why delay the punishment due to a guilty man? According to the laws of justice is not this an irregularity?

A. Yes, it is an irregularity, but it is only partial, and serves the purpose of securing more perfect order in the great whole—a momentary irregularity which later on will be corrected, and turn out to be itself the source of a more perfect regularity.

Q. But would it not be better to bring about this order of the whole, this more perfect regularity, without permitting that disorder, that irregularity?

A. This would be impossible; for if that man, at first wicked, and then by his extraordinary virtue a shining light to humanity, were punished immediately after his first sin, how could the germs of virtue and moral greatness which lie hidden in him be developed? Or how could he, in the order of Divine Providence,

(1) The Author seems to refer to the case of such men as Robespierre, Marat, etc., in the French Revolution of 1789.—*Tr.*

serve, though perhaps involuntarily, as an instrument for saving thousands of innocent men from misery, or punishing thousands of the wicked? Obviously, his wickedness, though remaining unpunished for a season, and giving occasion to an apparent irregularity, is the very thing which ministers to justice, and contributes to re-instate in the world the moral order on a larger scale than it could otherwise reach.

Q. But why should this be necessary?

A. Because all creatures are limited; and therefore it follows that they cannot, at one and the same time, unite in themselves every kind of good, or escape every kind of evil. Hence, in order to avoid certain evils, they must necessarily incur other evils, and in order to obtain certain goods they must necessarily submit to the loss of other goods. Accordingly, the great art, so to speak, by which Divine Wisdom controls and governs the world, lies not indeed in preventing all evil, but in disposing events in such a way that the evils it permits may be the means of realizing an amount of good that far outweighs them in the balance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MANY OF THOSE WHO COMPLAIN OF PROVIDENCE, HAVE A WRONG NOTION OF VIRTUE; AND YET VIRTUE, EVEN AS THEY CONSIDER IT, IS NOT WITHOUT TEMPORAL ADVANTAGES.

286. Very many of those who complain of Providence, take the name of *virtue* in an improper sense. They call those actions virtuous which are of immediate temporal advantage: such is their *natural virtue*. It may, however, be affirmed without fear of contradiction, that, strictly speaking, this is no true virtue; for, the moral law, in paying homage to which true virtue alone consists, although it begins to manifest itself to human intelligence during this mortal life, is in itself something eternal. Besides, man, considered as separated from God, cannot turn his affections and his thoughts save to things that will be, or may be, temporally beneficial; whether he seek those things for himself, or, being endowed with a kindly disposition, delight in extending them to others, he always acts in view of some temporal benefit, or at all events for a limited object which may at any moment be superseded by a greater. Perhaps a cold, calculating cast of mind will have the effect of rendering him a mere egotist, and of inducing him to be good to others only for his own sake, while an instinct of his heart—that instinct

which is never altogether extinguished in a human being—inclines him to benevolence. But instinct is not virtue: and yet he wishes that this mysterious and delightful instinct should be taken for a virtue, and flatters himself with the notion that it really is one, and takes the credit to himself accordingly He sees, moreover, that he could not resist this instinct without opposing truth, and that to oppose truth would be a thing objectively evil. But then, how is he to persuade himself that this objective evil is of all things the most hurtful to him, and that nothing in this world could compensate him for it? At most, he might strive to interpret such pure and noble promptings of nature as indicating the will of a legislator and generous remunerator, who keeps himself shrouded in mystery; and thus it would be only by an act of faith that virtue could be made efficacious and begin to reign in him. Virtue! sublime and sweet name! The mortal who has lost his God, hears its sound, but he understands not its meaning. For, truly, it is only when man's actions are informed by the love of a law in which he sees an infinitely lovable and mighty Legislator, that that law acquires for him a new loveliness, and exerts a new power over him, and makes those actions truly deserving to be called virtuous. Then, rooted in an infinite good, virtue becomes as immovable in him as is the law on which it depends; rises superior to all human passions and feelings; transcends in value all temporal interests and advantages.

But it is not yet time for us to speak of true virtue: our business now is to argue with those who, while giving the name of virtue to those actions which are

temporally advantageous, complain of Divine Providence.

287. I say, then, that the complaints of these utilitarians are in contradiction with their own definition of virtue. For, if virtue consists in aiming at and working for temporal advantages, it is clear that those are most virtuous who know how to do this best. And are not these, on the whole, also the most prosperous?

288. Let us observe this, first, in the relation which each man has with his fellow men, and then in the relation which he has with himself.

Every man defends himself against his aggressors; and so does society. In all communities there is an established system of justice for repressing offences against the public order and the rights of property. Whence did civil society itself originate but from the necessity of each being strengthened by the co-operation of all, to enable them to defend their properties and their freedom from the molestation of the ill-disposed? The same also was necessary for maintaining a fixed order of things, in which the well-behaved might with greater security enjoy the distinctions and rewards of a life free from reproach. Human society, then, regarded in its general aspect, is that which makes an effectual provision for punishing crime and for giving virtue its due. In all nations, there is, and always has been, a public administration of justice, which is considered sacred, and, as it were, the sword of God. If any escape from it, they can only be the exception.

289. But the name of virtue, in the sense we are speaking of, is used to signify, not merely what is done for the well-being of society, as that of vice is used

to mean what is done against the same, but also to signify that system of proper self-control, which the individual observes in regard to his own person, or, more briefly, the utility which the individual seeks for himself. For example, a man who is strictly temperate, and who so regulates his house as always to keep his expenditure within his income, without at the same time being niggardly, is justly held to be worthy of praise. But do not virtues of this kind secure all the temporal reward they are entitled to? Indeed, they are called virtues for this very reason. And are not the contrary vices punished by disease and other misfortunes which follow in their train? The spendthrift is soon reduced to poverty; the miser, to say nothing of the cruel privations he inflicts on himself, becomes an object of hatred and execration to all the world; the drunkard begets a thousand diseases in his body. Take away gluttony and intemperance from mankind, and you will have extirpated the greater number of diseases. The proverbial longevity of priests and of those who lead the religious life, is a patent proof of the advantage which temperance procures in the present life.

290. Let us make another consideration. Nothing is more common in our time than to give prominence to the fact that even great criminals, with all their vices, are not without certain traits which are called virtues. A discernment that can forecast the future; a capability for conceiving great projects, together with an undaunted courage in carrying them into execution; intrepidity in dangers; fertility of resource; a presence of mind that is never taken aback in any emergency however sudden; these, and qualities like these, are

things which the world admires and praises. In fact, they have in them a peculiar worth, a kind of natural goodness. Is it not right that the diligent, the laborious, the provident, should acquire a larger share of this life's goods than the negligent, the slothful, the improvident, who do not look beyond the present moment? These goods are like a citadel that must be carried by assault, or a province that must be subjugated by hard fighting. Men contend for them, and the victory is for the most valiant. It is true that at times, through some unforeseen accident, the reverse happens; but it is not less certain that under equal circumstances, the best man, as the saying is, has always the best chance. This greater probability of success is what invariably gives the advantage to those who are possessed of the worth of which I speak.

291. It is, however, necessary for us to ponder well on the reason why these endowments and these merits of the person, which are so much admired and extolled, fail sometimes to obtain their temporal reward. What has been said above, will furnish us with a reason easy to understand. All these good qualities belong to human nature; consequently, they are liable to fail, because the same liability is essentially inherent in human nature.

The prudence with which superior men who make the acquisition of temporal goods the aim of their lives, are wont to proceed; the fairness, equity, and beneficence by which they win the goodwill of those around them; the temperance and austerity with which they discipline themselves for hard work; the fortitude which they exhibit in the midst of dangers; that kind of magnanimity which causes them to prefer an honoured

name even to life itself; these and the like virtues are nothing but an effort which human nature makes to aggrandize and ennoble itself, and thus find contentment. But as, owing to that limitation which we touched upon above, it cannot acquire these perfections without external aid, the aid of a being who, having them in himself, is able to communicate them to others; so it is not only fitting, but necessary, that all such efforts should be unavailing. In this way human nature gives glory to that God from Whom it has separated itself. Hence, albeit those who are endowed with the virtues referred to, find it easier to obtain temporal goods than those who are not; nevertheless, they do not always obtain them; and when they do obtain them, they soon come to lose them by death. This, then, is how the powers of mere human nature really stand even when viewed in reference to the attainment of temporal goods; THESE GOODS CANNOT BE ATTAINED WITH CERTAINTY, OR EXCEPT UPON THE INEXORABLE CONDITION OF THEIR HAVING QUICKLY TO BE LOST TO THEIR POSSESSOR. What a humiliating thought for this proud nature of ours!

292. And even what good there is in all this, must be ascribed to the Goodness of God; for all those endowments which we have enumerated above were received by man with his nature, and man's nature is the work of God. That very truth which naturally shines upon the human intellect is not man, but a divine appurtenance. The only good thing which man may properly call his own is that kind of love of self which prompts him to use his endowments and powers more or less energetically, more or less sagaciously,

and without interfering with the interests of others, and which on this account wins for him the repute of being a lover of justice. But the love of justice, as taught by the light of natural reason alone, proves ineffectual when all interests seem to go dead against it. We find pleasurable and noble instincts implanted in the human soul; yet, as a matter of fact, we also find that, rather than these instincts being set in motion, as they ought to be, by man's moral faculty—the will—it is they that set this in motion; and they are not always calculated to succour human reason. Nevertheless, the Power and Wisdom of God have so disposed things, that by means of mere natural justice and even mere natural prudence, man should be able to avoid many temporal evils, and secure many temporal advantages. Now, from this law which conjoins temporal good with virtue and wisdom, and temporal evil with vice and folly—and which is sometimes fallacious, as it was fitting that it should be—men, instead of taking occasion to give honour to the Supreme Providence, took occasion to be puffed up with arrogance and pride. They invented a doctrine full of presumption, now by promising to such imperfect virtue as the natural virtue is, a constant natural happiness; now by defining virtue as a mere seeking after temporal advantages, and calling those men virtuous who best understand the art of enriching themselves with human goods. In the meantime, however, the votary of utilitarianism recognizes and justifies unawares to himself the Providence of the Creator.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHY TEMPORAL GOOD SHOWS A TENDENCY TO ACCOMPANY NATURAL VIRTUE, AND TEMPORAL EVIL TO ACCOMPANY VICE.

293. But why is it that in the apportionment of natural good and evil, the law which we have just referred to is seen to prevail, namely, that temporal prosperity has a continual tendency to accompany natural virtue, and temporal adversity, generally speaking, to follow in the wake of vice?

This fact is due not less to God's original collocation of the beings forming the universe, and His selection of their first free movements, than to the goodness He imparted to them by the creative act—a goodness at which he expressed His delight by saying, as we read in Genesis (ch. 1), that all things which He had made were good. This goodness, however, which creatures owe to likeness with the Creator, does not exclude that imperfection which we have noted above, and by reason of which it comes to pass that even the intellective creature—the most excellent of all—stands continually in need of the aid of its Maker, the infinitely perfect Being. Hence:

In creatures, two elements must be distinguished: the one *negative*, namely LIMITATION; the second *positive*, namely, THE PARTICIPATION OF EXISTENCE. The first element renders them capable of every evil,

unless God by an act of free loving kindness comes to their assistance; the second renders them capable of order and of every good. The first comes from themselves—I mean from their original nothingness; the second comes to them from creation.

294. These things were seen also and expressed, although somewhat confusedly, by the earliest philosophers. Whether it was that they received from the primitive traditions some lights of which we cannot now well appreciate the importance; or that some extraordinary intellects, breaking through the darkness in which men had of their own accord enveloped themselves, succeeded in catching some glimpses of the highest truths; or, as is more probable, from both these causes together; certain it is that in the writings of those studious men, which have come down to us, we find traces of a wisdom far greater than we might be led to expect from those miserable times. In proof of this, it may suffice to quote a passage from Plato, where, expounding the doctrine of Timæus of Locris, he comes very near the theory of the two elements which are to be found in the nature of all created things; and from which all the constituent laws of the universe are derived; although the Locrian Philosopher, perhaps from not having expressed his concept with sufficient clearness, could not afterwards successfully rebut some erroneous consequences which others insisted on drawing from it. Plato, then, writes: "According to Timæus of Locris, all things proceed from two causes." (This is the same as to say, that whatever is observed in the universe may be explained by means of two principles.) "First, *mind*, whence proceed all those things which come into existence in virtue of some

reason." (Here we have the Divine ideas, the causes and exemplars of all that there is of positive in created natures.) "Then *necessity*, whence proceed those things which exist in virtue of a certain kind of force in accordance with the powers and faculties of bodies." (Here we have limitation, the cause, as we have seen, of necessity, which is, more than in all other things, observed in the corporeal and material.)

295. Now, is it not a delightful thing for the mind to consider how all the laws of the constitution of the universe originate from two elements alone?

In fact, the limitation of creatures (first element) produces that Cosmic Law by which ALL NATURES, ABANDONED TO THEMSELVES, ARE LIABLE TO EVIL—a most universal law, which the sin of the intellective creature has brought out into full light. Hence the sublime and mysterious saying of the Gospel: HE THAT HUMBLETH HIMSELF SHALL BE EXALTED, AND HE THAT EXALTETH HIMSELF SHALL BE HUMBLED.

296. The goodness placed in beings by the creative act, and indeed identical with the beings themselves (second element), produces the other constituent cosmic laws, THESE LAWS BEING NOTHING BUT THE CONSTANT RELATIONS BETWEEN FINITE BEINGS CONSIDERED IN THE DIVINE MIND.

297. The primitive position which Divine Wisdom assigned to these beings could not change these laws whereby the universe is governed: it merely regulated their action; in other words, it determined the cases to which they would actually apply—for example, that given number of times, that place, that moment, in which beings would be found to combine in such a manner that this or that law would come into opera-

tion. If you imagine in the atmosphere two clouds charged with opposite kinds of electricity, and suppose that there is a conducting medium between them, you have the combination of the three things that are requisite for the action of the law of electrical equilibrium. Without this equilibrium, the law would have been just as true as it is now, but it would have had no occasion for manifesting itself.

298. The application, then, of the cosmic laws, depends upon the combination of things.

From this we can see how futile is the objection which we hear sometimes urged against the efficacy of prayer, on the ground that God does not change the laws of the universe. To hear our petitions, God has no need whatever of changing these laws. All He has to do is to dispose them that they may operate in one way rather than in another; and for this purpose it is quite enough to assume that He has, in His all-wise foreknowledge, pre-ordained the combinations of things, and therefore the cases in which these same laws would be applied and outwardly manifested. There is no question of excluding electricity from the law of equilibrium; it is simply a question of preventing the communication between the two clouds through the conducting medium; and such communication would, according to our assumption, be prevented in consequence of the primordial disposition of things.

CHAPTER XX.

TEMPORAL MISERIES SERVE TO DISPOSE MAN TO SUPERNATURAL VIRTUE, AND, CONSEQUENTLY, TO SUPERNATURAL HAPPINESS.

299. But it is time for us to consider that human excellence to which the venerable name of *virtue* applies in all the fulness of its meaning. All external actions, no matter how excellent and admirable they may seem to human eyes, are merely the body of virtue, not its soul. Its soul, its *form*, (1) lies in the sublimity and purity of the aim of those actions, which is hidden away in the inmost recesses of the human will, where virtue has its throne. Supernatural virtue, as we have said, leaving all creation aside, lifts men up from earth to heaven; it immediately unites the limited with the infinite. Indeed, in our present state, it is nothing else than the acknowledgment of the limitation of human nature, and the reunion of this nature with God. Christian Faith teaches that man's reunion with God is purely the effect of grace, freely given by God's bountifulness, and freely accepted by man. It is not man that of his own movement goes to God; it is God

(1) *Form*, in the philosophic sense in which the Author uses the word here, is that which makes a given thing to be *what* it is, to have the *nature* it has. Thus the rational soul is the *form* of the human body, because it is in virtue of the soul that this body is a *human*, and not merely an animal body. Or we may also say that *form* is what determines the *specific essence* of a thing.—*Tr.*

that comes to man. By loving us first, God creates in us together with the obligation the power of loving Him in return. This God did even in the beginning: but man, inebriated, as it were, by the sense of the perfection he had received, forgot his need of the Divine Benefactor; for a want which has been fully satisfied is not felt. But the evils which ensued upon the privation of God, had the effect of rousing him again to a sense of his insufficiency. Then out of pure goodness, God loved man again, although man himself was incapable even of conceiving in what the loving aid of his Creator consisted. Indeed, so deadly an evil is sin, that, whilst it inflicts a frightful wound in the innermost recesses of our nature, it prevents our being aware of it, precisely because it wounds and corrupts what we may call the very organ by which we come to know our moral evils and necessities.

The plan decreed by Divine Mercy for accomplishing the work of human restoration was therefore as follows: that man, through a continued experience of physical ills, should be made aware of his own insufficiency; that one Man entirely free from sin, whose Manhood was taken by the Godhead unto a Divine Person, should spontaneously submit to these ills, and thus acquire an immense credit with Divine Justice; and that, by transferring this credit to his fellow-men He might be able to pay off their debts, and communicate anew to them that union with God which He, as Man-God, possessed by nature. The claims of Divine Justice being thus satisfied, man could be re-united with God, not merely in the way he was united at first, but in a way much more intimate and excellent. So long as human nature was perfect,

there was no obstacle to its being supernaturally united with God; but this obstacle is put by the infection of sin. Hence in the former state, God could effect man's union with his Maker by a less powerful grace than He can in the latter. Consequently, the greater man's imperfection is in his fallen condition, the more abundant is the grace which comes to his rescue.

300. It is, then, (wonderful to say!) in nature's very infirmity that Divine grace shines forth in its greatest brilliancy, and, by consequence, human virtue finds its highest perfection; since through grace, man, weak though he be in himself, has the power of being supernaturally virtuous.

Being now at a greater distance from God than he was when his nature had no moral taint, a greater effort of virtue is necessary to re-unite him with his Maker. Now, the experience of physical miseries serves him as a stimulus to make this effort; for, not being a pure intelligence, but an intelligence acting through bodily organs, he can only realize his extreme need of God by sensible proof.

301. Hence it comes to pass that such a virtuous man never allows himself to complain of Divine Providence, be his temporal afflictions what they may. Filled with an eager desire of growing every day in the knowledge of himself, and in union with God, he conforms his will to the Eternal Wisdom, which reveals to him its secrets, and he welcomes his sufferings as so many aids which feelingly and effectually help him to know his natural imperfection, and, consequently, the need he has of that God from Whom he was estranged even from his origin. Humbly acknowledging that imperfection, he rejoices at seeing in it the very

place in which Divine grace finds an agreeable abode, and is pleased to show forth its grandeur. He exults in the thought that there is much for God to do in him, and very little for arrogant nature. Hence he delights in sufferings, and draws from them an ineffable and unique sweetness of such exquisite nature as has nothing like it on this earth, and he perceives that voluntary humiliation has been the seed of a new and unexpected greatness. With a thrill of joy his heart then assures him that he has conquered, and that, through being made one with Christ, (1) he has himself become the lord of nature, inasmuch as even were the entire universe to fall upon him, it would only serve to crown the triumph of his sacrifice. This is indeed a great and marvellous thing! The truly virtuous man groans in sufferings, and at the same time, instead of complaining, feels overjoyed by finding in those sufferings a hidden source of life; and the greater his virtue, the greater his joy. It is only the pretender to virtue who complains of Providence, he whose virtue is little else than a name; and the less virtuous he is, the louder his denunciations of what he would fain have people believe to be a wrong done to him. And yet his virtue, such as it is, ordinarily speaking, obtains its reward, as we have said, and for what it fails to obtain, the blame is due, as we shall presently see, to its own defect. Still he is not satisfied; he perverts the very kindnesses bestowed on him into an occasion for murmuring, and thereby commits a moral offence for which temporal reverses are no adequate punishment. (233.)

(1) Of course, not one in *person*, but by community of *life;* for those who are in the state of sanctifying grace partake of Christ's own life: "I live now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). The Gospel similitude of "the vine and the branches" (Jo. xv.) conveys the same truth.—*Tr.*

CHAPTER XXI.

THE VERY COMPLAINTS OF THOSE WHO, ALTHOUGH ABOUNDING IN TEMPORAL GOODS, ACCUSE DIVINE PROVIDENCE OF NOT DOING THEM JUSTICE, ARE A JUSTIFICATION OF THE SAME PROVIDENCE.

303. In the very complaints, however, to which we have just referred, it is easy to see a new justification of Divine Providence.

For if, as a matter of fact, the further removed a man is from true virtue, the more prone he shows himself to carp at the Divine dispositions, is it not plain that that man feels unhappy, that temporal goods have no power to appease the cravings of his heart?

Of a truth, it is one thing to possess temporal goods, and quite another thing to enjoy them. Those are greatly in error who take the distribution of this kind of goods as the test whereby to judge of human happiness. What does it profit to have an abundant supply of them, if one does not know how to use them? if, instead of proving a source of contentment, they only serve to harass the soul with desires, followed in their turn by a thousands fears, anxieties, and heart-burnings? In the eyes of sober reason, a spare meal of the humblest fare, but seasoned with joy, peace, innocence, a good name, and human benevolence, is far better than princely banquets embittered with the poison of enmities,

discords, dark suspicions, the maledictions of God and men, and comfortless remorse.

304. Let us, then, consider temporal goods, not in themselves, but in their use, I mean in the degree of contentment which they afford to their possessors, and all apparent irregularities will vanish; for we shall find that these degrees are invariably in the ratio of the amount of true virtue.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CONTENTMENT WHICH THE TRUE CHRISTIAN FINDS IN TEMPORAL AFFLICTIONS, INSTEAD OF DETRACTING FROM HIS RIGHT TO AN ETERNAL REWARD, INCREASES IT.

305. In all that I have said thus far, there is nothing to invalidate that proof of the existence of a future state which philosophers have drawn from the violations of justice so frequent in this life, where we have often to bewail the oppression of the good, and the undue exaltation of the wicked.

For, although a truly good man finds in his conscience a peace and joy far outweighing all he has to suffer in the case in question, it is to God alone and to his own virtue that he owes this blessing. Hence his claim to redress, as against his oppressor, always remains unsatisfied. A time must therefore come when the oppressor shall be humbled under him, and make reparation for the wrong done. This, Eternal Justice demands.

306. Moreover, the interior joy which a virtuous man knows how to draw from sensible sufferings is itself a merit calling for reward. O the Goodness and Wisdom of the Most High! First, He teaches us the secret, and infuses into us the power of converting temporal sorrows into a well-spring of sweetest delight;

and then He puts this very delight to our credit, entitling us to other delights immeasurably greater and eternal. For, such indeed are those joys which await the wayfarer on this earth who has walked in faith and in the firm hope of the recompense promised him by the God of truth.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PENALTIES, POSITIVE AND NATURAL, OF EVIL DOERS. GOODNESS OF GOD TOWARDS THEM.

307. Setting aside, however, the question of interior contentment, in which alone true happiness consists, and considering solely the external apportionment of temporal evils; we have already seen how those immoral actions which prove detrimental to society are generally punished at its hands, and those whereby the law of proper self-control is violated, become a prolific source of painful bodily ailments (288, 289). It is only in the case of crimes committed directly against God that retribution seems to be comparatively rare, for the reason that men do not care to punish evil-doing save in so far as it causes injury to themselves. To this class of crimes committed against the Creator belong certain offences which are not hurtful to society except when repeated a great number of times, although each commission of them is an offence against the reverence which is due to God and to His holy law. Yet it is also true that these do not altogether escape temporal punishments.

308. In the first place, when they redound to the injury of society, society itself, as I have said, makes a point of punishing them. And here it will be well to observe that those who break the laws of God have already an evil and disordered will; hence it often

happens that they receive from human justice those chastisements which God in His patience delays inflicting on them.

309. In the second place, sin, and the consequences of it, degrade and debase the human soul to a degree of which it would be impossible to form a full and adequate conception.

Whatever efforts a man conscious of guilt may make to think highly of himself, however many may be the shifts of his pride, it is always true that he lies prostrate under the fatal blow he has received. Go whithersoever he will, he always carries with him an impress of foulest turpitude, which has the effect of depressing his spiritual energies, and, in consequence, of stamping with an inexplicable feebleness all the actions which he performs, all the undertakings in which he engages, all the attempts which he makes at self-aggrandizement, and which should be called rather the spasmodic efforts of despair than the resolute darings of true courage. The foulness of that impress, and its attendant diminution of spiritual energy, go on increasing in proportion to the frequency with which these unhappy men repeat their offences; so much so, that the very efforts which they make in sinning serve to hasten their deterioration. So the dismal downward progress continues until at last their prostration becomes complete. Such is the way in which moral evil naturally works out its own penalty. And I am inclined to believe that it is to the physical and moral deterioration insensibly produced in certain families by the sins of the parents, that we must attribute the abject beggary into which those families are seen gradually to fall, and from which it is afterwards so extremely difficult to raise them, on

account of their utter want of elasticity, of prevision, of light, of aptitude to be stirred up to act, or to feel the force of an argument. Indeed, I am not sure whether the origin of savage tribes may not be traced to a similar cause. Sin naturally begets fear and that terrible dread which trembles at a light gust of wind and at the rustling of a leaf; and the last results of this are convulsive agitations of the soul, most opprobrious carnal sins, incendiary theories, despair, suicide. (1)

310. Moreover, according as in a civil commonwealth the significance of this degradation of the soul is more or less understood, and the importance of religion for the social good is more or less keenly felt, offences directed against God are punished by the laws with greater or less severity. Hence the difference which we observe in the attitude assumed by society at different periods with reference to the punishment of crimes against religion, and to the rewards bestowed on virtuous conduct.

311. Hence also we can see that of the two parties that may be offended by sin, I mean God and man, God is by far more indulgent and forbearing; for whilst man punishes the culprit at once, God very often allows him ample time to repent and amend. On the other hand, we must not lose sight of the fact that no punishment of this life could ever be an adequate satisfaction for sin, and this fact is itself a new proof of the existence of a future state.

(1) On this subject, see the Author's *Essay on Hope* ("Saggio sulla Speranza").

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE QUESTION OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF TEMPORAL GOOD AND EVIL SOLVED WHEN VIEWED IN REFERENCE TO THE SUPERNATURAL.

312. The apportionment of good and evil resulting from God's primary arrangement of the universe, was made, not so much out of regard to the claims of that lofty virtue which aspires to an eternal reward, as in accordance with two other laws of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness.

These are precisely the laws to the clearing up of which this second book is chiefly directed. For, it is by the consideration of them that the Christian's mind is set completely at rest, and that he feels powerfully incited to the tenderest gratitude towards God, and to the most devout admiration of His greatness.

313. Indeed, it is only the Christian to whom the whole of the great design of Providence can be imparted, and by whom it can be contemplated in its entirety, without any exclusion of parts, because only the Christian knows the place which he occupies in the universe, and understands all the relations which bind man to the created things around him, as well as to the eternal Creator Who pervades the whole. The unbeliever, on the contrary, blind to the highest truths touching his own nature, knows neither what his place is, nor by

himself; and so he vegetates like an insensate brute in the midst of a universe, which, although radiant on all sides with light, is, to him, dark and inexplicable, even as he is inexplicable to himself.

314. The same must be said of those philosophers who, ambitious of drawing all knowledge from themselves, begin by excluding the very possibility of thought; I mean by basing all their reasonings on the absurd assumption that God and revealed doctrines must be treated as non-existent. In this way they render themselves incapable of applying their minds to the consideration of God's counsels, and make a bargain, so to speak, with their pride to close up against themselves the avenues of wisdom. If you enter into an argument with them, you are compelled to use an arid and crippled kind of discourse; because, owing to their peculiar disposition, to set before them the grand order of Divine Providence in anything like its glorious fulness, would be of no use whatever. In reality, they idolize their own reason as much as they hate truth; and on this very account they put senseless restrictions on reason itself, and enchain it with arbitrary bonds, lest it should set foot in a region spacious and fruitful, thrown open to them by a generous Master. But because this region is not their own, they prefer to perish in their indigence. Or else they simply disbelieve and blaspheme whatever does not come from their own reason. And as from their own reason left to itself there comes nothing but darkness, the result is that they are continually walking along a road on which none of the things which the Word of God has created is to be met with—the dismal road of *nullism*.

The reader will now see how it was that in dealing in previous chapters with the question of the providential apportionment of good and evil in this life, I stopped, so to speak, at its surface. I could not do otherwise. Having to view this question in reference to what is called natural virtue, I was obliged to judge of it according to the elementary and meagre concepts of human philosophy, rather than according to the plenitude of Christian wisdom. Now, however, that the time is come for viewing the same question in reference to supernatural virtue, I shall be able thoroughly to sift it; for I shall address myself to Christians, namely, to persons who are not children in respect to truth, but have been rendered adult and robust by the secrets concerning Divine and human nature, which Revelation discloses to them.

And of a truth, in the present state of fallen humanity, what relates to supernatural virtue is all that a Christian need care about. For, since man is born in sin, would his salvation be possible without Faith in the Redeemer? And what is this Faith, this beginning of salvation, but a supernatural relation of man? Therefore, all that in the present state restores man to moral perfection and to happiness is supernatural. In this supernatural relation, then, begins and ends all that is truly of importance for him, all that contains, not a mere hypothetical speculation, but substantial saving truth.

CHAPTER XXV.

FIRST LAW OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF TEMPORAL GOOD AND EVIL:—IT MUST ALL SERVE UNTO THE PERFECTING OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST.

315. Coming, then, to the two laws of Providence which must now engage our attention, it will be well first of all to recall to mind that God's design in permitting the fall was that He might thence draw a form of human virtue and happiness higher than would have been attained without that permission—the virtue of Christ, which consists in love reuniting the sinful creature with its offended Creator.

316. This virtue, with the happiness consequent upon it, must therefore be brought upon the earth, and there triumph over all things. For this object, it was necessary that the society of men banded together for the cultivation of this same virtue, should have assured to it by the Supreme Providence a perpetual existence. But no society composed of men can continue to exist unless it be provided with external goods. Again, this society was destined to triumph and to go on increasing until it embraced at last the whole of mankind. It followed from this, that all temporal goods must be made subservient to its end, so that the same society might truly be said to draw all things to itself. Such is the history of the Church of Jesus Christ; such the first law according to which God had even from the

beginning disposed that all temporal goods should be distributed. In His all-seeing wisdom, He assigned these goods, not to virtuous individuals, but to the society of the virtuous; not to be given all at once, but in the succession of times; not as the reward of virtue, but as the means of subsistence to its possessors, of their multiplication, and of their triumph over human cupidity.

The first law, then, by which God apportions good and evil may be formulated thus:—

ALL THINGS MUST SERVE TO THE CONSERVATION, INCREASE, AND SANCTIFICATION OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST.

317. For this end, it would not have sufficed that virtue should merely be regarded with greater favour than vice by mankind at large. This favour is extended even to that sort of human virtue in which the interests and cupidities of men are concerned. The individual, generally speaking, finds it to his advantage to moderate his own cupidity so as to be free to show a certain equity towards the cupidity of those around him (286—288). But this can in no way be said of Christian virtue, it being of the very essence of this virtue to place no trust whatever in nature as such, and to rely solely on God. Consequently, it falls as a crushing weight upon carnal hearts, scattering to the winds all their expectations, or rather their vain illusions, and showing forth in most vivid light the humiliating insufficiency of all the affections, the passions, the reckonings and forecastings of this nature, which, having separated itself from God, presumes on its ability to secure greatness and happiness by its own resources. Hence the wrath and fury of proud

nature against this sudden rush of light, which compels it to see itself as it really is. And here we have the true source of all the wrongs done to Christian virtue; of all the hatred shown to, and the cruel ill-treatments inflicted upon, holy men; of all the persecutions of the Church.

Nature, inflated with the belief of its own sufficiency, knows nothing beautiful, nothing great, outside itself. Following this as the only rule of its judgments, it must of necessity despise all those whom it sees making little of its endowments, viewed in themselves. It must therefore despise Christians, who are the great offenders in this respect. On the other hand, Christians cannot come to terms with nature; for they have knowledge of other goods infinitely more excellent than mere natural endowments. They feel that they are powerfully supported by the Divine aid, nay, that they are possessed of God Himself. Furnished with this great gift, they see clearly how very small is the value and how very short the duration of mere natural good, and hence how foolish it would be for them to seek to deceive themselves in their estimate of the same.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THREE DIVINE DECREES CONCERNING THE EXECUTION OF THE FIRST LAW OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF GOOD AND EVIL IN REFERENCE TO SUPERNATURAL VIRTUE.

318. The antagonism between all that is admired by the world, and what is called Christian piety, is a well-known fact apparent at all times and in all places.

In the eyes of the world, this piety is the very quintessence of all that is ignoble, weak, and foolish. But God's decree is, that what is supposed to be ignoble, weak, and foolish, shall in reality be the very power that triumphs in the combat—in other words, that the invisible grace which is in man, shall at last triumph over all visible nature, and triumph with all the pomp, and, I would almost say, with all the *éclat* which it is possible to imagine.

319. To effect this purpose, God from the beginning would seem to have embodied the fundamental law of which we have just spoken in three distinct decrees. Of these the first appears to have been:—

THAT THEY WHO OPPOSE THE JUST, MAY PROSPER FOR AWHILE, BUT THAT THEY MUST FAIL IN THE END.

Open the book of history. You there see all the kingdoms of the earth beginning, growing, and decaying. In their midst you see the Church of God, ever

the same in her humility, surviving all mortal greatness. From her very first appearance, in the most despised and abhorred of nations, in the hands of a few poor fishermen, followers of One Who had been executed as a criminal, she proclaims herself destined to fill the whole earth! And yet no one derides so extraordinary an announcement; all take it as a most serious thing. The great ones of the earth are alarmed; the rulers of imperial Rome put forth their vast power to annihilate her. For three long centuries does the battle, or rather the butchery, continue; and in all regions innocent blood flows in torrents. The conflict over, whose is the victory? Wearied out with the slaughter of the just, who do not resist, but allow themselves to be torn to pieces as lambs by wolves, the Cæsars are, one after the other, punished by the wrath of God, and most of them in a terrible way. The Church, in accordance with her mission, has gathered as many immortal laurels as were the blows struck at her. Laden with these unfading trophies, she has always advanced, she has made her way up to the throne, and received the master of the world himself as one of her children; full of clemency, she has taken to her loving embraces the descendant of the tyrants. They had been able to begin, but they could not finish.

After this period, the Church's trials have not ceased, for they never are to cease; but the issue of all her various battles is always similar to the first. Whether she be again assailed by the cruel violence of brute power, or by the sophisms and craftiness of the dominant philosophy, or by the obstinate malice of heretics, or by the barbarity of the times, or by the licentiousness of her own children, or by the hypocrisy of her

indocile ministers, or by all these things together; she indeed mourns, she shows herself in a state of consternation, and anxious, more about her children than about herself; all her enemies are shouting with joy over her groanings, and trumpeting forth their victory to the four winds: but wait. The suffering one still lives, and firmly maintains the struggle by her faith, her meekness, her unconquerable patience, her prayers, and the offer of her blood. Ah! lovely spouse of Jesus Christ, cease weeping, be comforted, and look around thee. Thine enemies are gone; they have passed away like a shadow of the night, they are all buried in the earth, the food of worms, and their names are either forgotten or held in execration. Thou dost still endure, as full of life as ever, and the universe proclaims thy triumph.

320. These historical observations imply that God, from the beginning, disposed human goods in such a way that His Church should always be furnished with as much of them as she needed. Those who look at events in connexion with their proximate causes, find them, ordinarily speaking, quite natural; for the reason that was mentioned above, namely, that God has ordained all things in the universe to be linked together as cause and effect. Nevertheless, the fact of this close connexion of all events being due to the original arrangement of things, does not render it any the less attributable to the will and ordinance of God; indeed, it sets forth in a more vivid light the sublimity of His Wisdom in that arrangement, wholly directed to favour the good.

The moral of these reflections is, that in the vicissitudes of human affairs we ought to admire and adore

the unfathomable Wisdom, the ineffable Goodness, and the ever present Will of God; and furthermore, to understand that there is nothing more foolish than to take the concatenation of events as an excuse for not adoring in all things the Divine Will, since this concatenation is itself entirely the work of that Will.

321. The second decree would seem to have been this:—

THAT THE VIRTUE OF THE JUST MUST TRIUMPH MORE FULLY BY MEANS OF THEIR TEMPORAL OPPRESSION.

322. We have already said that men, left to their own devices, dispute and strive with one another for the possession of temporal goods; and the stronger and abler get the larger share (288, 290, 291). Such is the law according to which these goods are distributed, in the order of natural virtue.

But the introduction into the world of the new virtue, the virtue of Jesus Christ, which aims at the acquisition not of temporal, but of eternal goods, and relies, not on the power of nature, but solely on that of grace, brought with it a new law. Thenceforth to despise, or rather, not to trust in goods of this kind, was to be the means of obtaining them.

323. For this reason, wonderful as it may seem, Christian nations will ever excel the other nations of the world, even in what goes to constitute human splendour, and this for no other reason than that there is in them, on the whole, a greater degree of detachment from human goods.

The Church, always humble and poor in spirit, and her priests together with her, will be continually enriched, in proportion as her ministers sincerely love poverty, and exhibit a conspicuously disinterested

magnanimity in the holy use of wealth. Such is the astounding but inevitable course of things. Poverty was chosen by Jesus Christ as the educator and instructor of His followers. It is, if I may use the expression, their primary virtue. They are distinctly commanded not to be solicitous about anything, but to leave the care of themselves to God, Who does not forget them, Who in fact has thought of them even from the beginning of creation. This their superior wisdom which fixes its gaze directly upon the designs of God, and abandons itself to those designs with perfect tranquillity, looking up to God for everything, because it seeks His and not man's triumph; this entire and most humble poverty of spirit, is what must prepare for them, and put them in possession of, those earthly goods from which their hearts are all the while wholly detached.

But the Church, besides teaching the world detachment from these goods by the example of her most trustworthy children leading poor and mortified lives, must also teach the right use of them. In this way she must successively exercise and exhibit in herself all those virtues which may be practised in the use of the things of this world; and although externally possessed of all things, she must be as detached in heart from them as when she had them not. Made rich and mighty, not by men, but by God in Whom alone she puts her trust, she must through the course of ages fulfil the word of her Divine Founder: "I SHALL DRAW ALL THINGS TO MYSELF," (1) that is, to the nakedness of the cross.

(1) Jo. xii. 32.

324. The third and last decree, which completes the other two, may be expressed thus :—

THAT THE VICTORY OF THE JUST, AND THEIR DOMINION OVER ALL THINGS, MUST BE ENJOYED BY THEM IN COMMON WITH CHRIST.

Since detachment from natural things is the distinguishing feature of Christian virtue, and what wins the victory over them, and leads to their external possession; it follows that the true Christian, feeling his immense superiority over all the forces of nature, must ever rejoice in external sufferings, and therefore regard it as a great happiness to suffer, not only for his own salvation, but also for the salvation of others. Should he happen to suffer more than his own sins require, he would certainly be compensated by God for the excess. He would, in a way, gain a credit with God, entitling him, after he has been himself redeemed, to be a redeemer of his fellow men. He would thus participate in all that belongs to the Author of grace Himself, even in the work of Redemption. What a transport of joy must the consciousness of this sublime participation produce in the soul! And this joy returns, so to speak, upon itself at every instant, and by this continual returning, incessantly renews and multiplies itself! True, it is hidden from the world; but it is all the more precious for being hidden. The profane understand it not: it is the ineffable secret of the Saints.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SECOND LAW OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF TEMPORAL GOOD AND EVIL:—THIS DISTRIBUTION IS DIRECTED TO EDUCATE MEN TO THE GOSPEL.

325. In order that the Society which is deputed as the custodian of perfect virtue on this earth might uninterruptedly exist to the end of time, it was also necessary that in the distribution of temporal good, ordained at the beginning of things, God should have regard to the weakness and infirmity of that nature in which He intended to ingraft His grace. He had not to destroy its constituent elements, but only to perfect it; and even this He had to do with gentleness through those laws of His grace which I have hinted at above, and which reveal, in the redemption of souls, a wisdom similar to that exhibited in the creation of the material world, where every thing is harmoniously presented and developed by means of uniform and regular operations.

Hence, the second fundamental law observed by Divine Providence in the apportionment of temporal good and evil was this:—

TEMPORAL GOOD AND EVIL MUST BE DISPENSED ON EARTH ACCORDING AS IS REQUISITE IN ORDER THAT GOD'S PEOPLE MAY BE EDUCATED TO THE VIRTUE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Certainly, even grace follows in its dispensation

certain laws assigned by God, and in large measure hidden from man; and in accordance with these man must be led to that virtue, wholly supernatural, which consists in a complete victory of the spirit over rebellious nature. Now, this could only be obtained by degrees, in proportion to the successive development of nature upon which grace is ingrafted, a development which is in great part accomplished by the action which temporal goods and evils exercise on men.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THREE DIVINE DECREES CONCERNING THE EXECUTION OF THE SECOND LAW OF THE APPORTIONMENT OF TEMPORAL GOOD AND EVIL VIEWED IN REFERENCE TO SUPERNATURAL VIRTUE.

326. God, therefore, seems to have made three marvellous decrees to direct the execution of this second law also. The first might perhaps be worded thus:—

THAT SO LONG AS THE TRUE BELIEVER, FROM WANT OF SUFFICIENT INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT, IS UNABLE TO FORM A CLEAR CONCEPTION OF A HAPPINESS ENTIRELY INDEPENDENT OF SENSIBLE THINGS, HE SHALL BE BLESSED WITH DOMESTIC AND NATIONAL PROSPERITY, AND THIS, IF NEED BE, EVEN BY MIRACLES; THAT HE MAY THUS BE MADE CERTAIN OF THE EXISTENCE OF A GOD WHO REWARDS VIRTUE.

327. This decree fulfils two purposes: the conservation and the uninterrupted existence of the society of the just for all time, and the succour afforded to the weakness and imperfection of individual just souls.

328. With regard to the society of the just, it remained in force until the coming of Christ, Who, by His blood rendered this society most pure and wholly spiritual. After His coming, it is applied only to individuals according as God in His mercy thinks fit, in consideration of their particular needs.

329. Now, we must first of all briefly explain how it

was that before the coming of Christ men of good will required this sensible aid more than they do at present.

The secret for mastering the difficulties which are presented to us by the history of the development of human nature, of its needs, and of its errors, must be sought in the law which the faculty of abstraction follows in its progress. Man, who at the beginning formed but one concrete whole, if I may so express myself, became in course of time divided into many parts. He had at first no notion of separating one thing from another in his judgments. The farther back we go into antiquity, the more simple and less marked by distinctions do we find these judgments to be; and it does not require much power of observation to make one see that *the source of ancient errors lay in the want of distinctions, while that of modern errors lies in the opposite excess.* Accordingly, man at the beginning could not abstract from sensible things, and fix his thought on spiritual things only. The individual was merged in the family, and when nations began to be formed, there existed in them a singular unity very closely resembling that of the family.

330. This oneness, and, so to say, concreteness which characterizes man's thoughts and feelings at that early period—this indivisibility of the perception of himself and the world around him, this inability to consider things under one particular aspect only, nay, this necessity of considering them in their entirety as they stood before him and represented themselves to his thought, without detaching from them any special qualities or relations in order to consider them apart—is a matter which calls for our careful attention. The more so, as we should not otherwise be able to

form a true and adequate idea of that primitive state, from which mankind has been ever since receding, and will ever continue to recede, in proportion as it developes and progresses. Moreover, without this, it would never be possible for us to know what kind of being man is. His nature cannot be known by considering it as it presents itself in some individuals, or in a small society, or even in civil society, or in all humanity together, if the examination is restricted to one particular period only. For the innumerable aspects, the aptitudes and the forms of which it is susceptive and which it goes on successively exhibiting and developing in the lapse of ages, are subject to endless variations. At the same time, it always contains, in its hidden recesses, new germs which cannot be observed and recognized, until each one, in its own proper season, shoots forth and grows up sufficiently to be submitted to observation and analysis.

And as we do not perceive a germ so long as it does not show itself by some little shoot or blade; so, on the other hand, when we examine some small branch put forth by this wonderful plant called humanity, we forget the root of the plant itself; we neglect to go back step by step till we reach its first germ, and are thus enabled to conceive that state from which its development began, and the knowledge of which is, as I have said, necessary to give us a true insight into all those conditions and modifications which are assumed by a being so changeable and so complex as man is.

Whence, in fact, so many vain and wholly inapplicable theories, for example, on education and on social government, but from a partial and inadequate

knowledge of human nature? Man is studied in the individual, and the individual furnishes but a scanty number of observable facts. He is observed as he is found in our time; and it is supposed that he has always been and always will be the same. But in reality he has existed in so many states, all differing from the present, that we do not even dream of them, do not so much as think of their possibility. And in like manner, being in continual motion, he will in course of time assume other states, equally new, and such as almost to make him seem of a different nature from that of to-day. I grant that for conceiving useful institutions it would be enough to understand the present state of mankind; but how could this state be understood save by a continual comparison with those of the past? It is by comparison alone that we come to notice the properties of things; and our attention is not attracted except by differences.

331. Again, whence so many false judgments passed on the earlier ages of the world? Whence that incredible rashness in censuring and condemning as base and bad whatever was done by our ancestors? Whence that eagerness to discover in them the extreme of ignorance and folly, and the very personification of wickedness, in order that our own wisdom and virtue (of which perhaps our posterity will make but very light account) may be exalted to the stars by the contrast? Whence, in fine, that revolting delight which some men seem to take in trying to make it appear that only a few ages ago the human race had not attained to the possession of even the most elementary principles of common sense, but was little better than the brutes, an offshoot of the race of apes? Whence,

I ask, all this? Simply from that proud presumption which does not care to take into account the divers states and modifications successively assumed by mankind, and forgets to consider that the manners and institutions of men are good or bad relatively to the state of mankind at the time in which they live. I repeat: man cannot be known by studying him only in that particular form in which he is presented to us by modern society. He must be studied on a far wider basis. Our estimate of him must be founded upon a diligent and impartial investigation into the most varied conditions in which he has existed in this world, and especially into that original condition from which his development started, as well as into the laws governing that first onward movement. Only by putting together the whole of the facts disclosed by such an investigation is it possible to judge accurately as to what would or would not be suited to humanity at any given period. In this sense it is true to say, as an able writer (1) said of late, that not the individual, but collective mankind is the competent witness of truth.

332. In fact, it is by the various states of mankind that the *materials* of our most important judgments are furnished; and no one can be better acquainted with those states than mankind itself, which is the subject of them. To what can man bear witness save to that which he sees? As the writer just referred to has wisely remarked, we must beware of confounding the power of production with the faculty of perception. (2)

(1) The Abbé de Lamennais had not severed himself from the Church when the Author wrote this.—*Tr.*

(2) Ce n'est donc parce qu'il se glorifie de sa raison que l'homme s'égare, mais parce qu'il se méprend sur sa nature en s'attribuant ce qui n'est

Does man perhaps create truth? Does he generate it from his own mind, form it with his own substance? Far from it. He can only *receive* it. He is limited to the objects which are set before him by an invisible force, which is not certainly himself (85–87). Such as they are presented, he sees them, enunciates them, divides and unites them. This is all that his reason can do. His capabilities extend no further; and any attempt to go beyond this boundary and produce a truth to himself, would be folly, I might almost say a sacrilege. It would be imitating that experimentalist who should pretend, by means of chemical operations, to increase the number of the elementary atoms of matter which God has created. The whole circle of man's knowledge, then, is, in ultimate analysis, reducible to what falls within the experience of his senses, or is conveyed to him by other men through language.

This being so, how could man at the beginning discriminate between the conflicting claims of body and spirit, of the individual and the family, of the family and the nation, of the nation and the entire

pas à lui. *Dans son orgueil il confond la capacité de connoître avec la puissance de produire.* Il oublie que son intelligence, purement passive à l'origine, naît et se développe à l'aide des vérités qu'on lui donne, et qu'elle ne possède que ce qu'elle a reçu. Doué du pouvoir de combiner les vérités primitives et d'en tirer des conséquences, pouvoir borné comme toute action d'un être fini, il cherche en soi la certitude ou la denière raison des choses, et ne l'y trouvant pas, il commence à douter. Les vérités se retirent, la nuit se fait; au milieu de cette nuit, il cesse de se reconnoître lui-même, seul et fier de sa solitude, il essaie de créer; il remue d'obscurs souvenirs, et croit peupler d'êtres réels son entendement désert, parce qu'il évoque des fantômes. Mais bientôt détrompé, las de ce vain labeur, il ferme les yeux et s'assoupit dans des ténèbres éternelles."—de Lamennais, Essai sur l'Indifference, etc. Chap. xix.

human race? Certainly, not by his own spontaneous and arbitrary movement, but solely according as the occasions for making all these distinctions and separations happened to offer themselves to him. It is true that God, by teaching him a certain number of words, had led him to mark with his mind the fundamental abstractions (99–115). But these were too few for his requirements; for the faculty of abstraction had to be applied to all his life, and to the judgments which he might day by day be called upon to pass on things. He knew from the beginning that within his mortal frame there dwelt an immortal spirit; but how could this first abstraction direct him in all his judgments on the value of things, or how could he draw from it all the consequences which it implicitly contained? He needed for this purpose repeated experiences of corporeal enjoyments and corporeal sufferings, and thus to be gradually brought to perceive that there was a good residing in the spirit alone, and a happiness which had in it nothing corporeally sensible. This was a separation from all that was most closely united to him by ties of nature, of love, of habit; it was a concentration upon himself; a state, therefore, entirely new to him; since, till then, he had only been able to conceive a happiness affecting his whole nature, composed of body and of spirit, and not a purely spiritual happiness.

The same must be said of virtue. Virtue presented itself to man embodied in actions, either his own or other men's; but what a long series of reflections and experiences had to be made ere he could arrive at a perfectly distinct idea of virtue in its inmost essence—of virtue, that is to say, wholly spiritual, and

consisting purely in the free act of an intelligent will conforming itself to the universal order of being! No doubt he knew from the first what was virtue and what was vice; but he contemplated both the one and the other, as I have just said, as they appeared in the actions of men, without discriminating between that which was material, and, as it were external in them, and that which constituted solely their form. To enable him to arrive at so high a degree of analytical knowledge, it was necessary that occasions should be afforded him of seeing actions which seemed virtuous, unaccompanied by interior virtue—that is, of seeing men who counterfeited virtue; or else that actions should come under his notice, which, although resembling those of virtue, or of vice, were simply (as in the case of brutes) the product of instinct, and hence deserving neither of praise nor of blame. It was also necessary that he should meet with instances in which a man, in spite of the purest and best intentions, could not externally perform a virtuous deed. The occurrence of many such cases would, by degrees, lead him to distinguish true from apparent virtue, intentions from their external realization, until there remained in his mind the moral element pure and simple, distinct from all external adjuncts.

333. But if man had a spirit, the seat of virtue and happiness, and a body which partook of both, he also found himself in the midst of a family, with wife and children, whom love joined with him in a union closer, I would almost say, than that which nature had formed between his own spirit and body. It was, therefore, again necessary that he should learn to separate in his mind the happiness and virtue of his spirit isolated

and alone, from that which diffused itself over those cherished portions, so to speak, or extensions of himself. Occasions must be given him of seeing men who, although abounding in every thing which goes to make up the temporal prosperity of a household, were restless and unhappy; and occasions of seeing others who, while plunged in the deepest domestic sorrow, as Job, for instance, found within themselves an invincible spiritual energy which made them proof against all misfortunes. Then, and then only, would he be in a position to advert to the difference between the temporal well-being of the family and interior happiness, and to separate the one from the other—in short, then only would he be in a position to understand that this well-being was merely an over-plus, and that the family was not essential to happiness, but only a something to which that happiness extended.

But let the family be multiplied, let its relations increase, the ties which bind the individual to his fellow men would increase in the same proportion; he would acquire a more extended existence—I mean national existence; and this would create the need of further abstraction. As he had to discriminate, first, between the spirit, the seat of virtue and happiness, and the body, which partook of both, then between the individual and the family which the virtue and happiness of the individual so intimately affects; so he must now discriminate between individual virtue and happiness, wholly spiritual, as we have said, and national virtue and happiness, which are merely an application and extension of those of the individual. Having now grown into a nation, he felt as if the nation were part

of himself, and, of course, saw that a vastly enlarged sphere for the exercise of his activity had arisen all around him. He must, therefore, be led to perceive that this new extension was not necessary for his complete happiness; that he communicated to it whatever morality and happiness he himself had, but in the same manner, I would almost say, as the sun which fills with its rays the whole of the sphere in which it moves, without that sphere being identified with itself. For this end new abstractions, and hence new experience of a suitable kind were required. He must witness cases of national prosperity largely shared in by men who were all the while unhappy, and of men who, without any such advantage, were quite happy and contented. By this means he would come clearly to understand that what belongs to the nation is a very different thing from what belongs to pure truth, pure virtue, pure happiness; as different as the modifications of human nature are from what constitutes the common and general basis of this nature.

334. Now, man cannot go through all these abstractions in a moment, he can only do so successively and by aid of repeated experience; and the more so, as each abstraction implies the one before it, since, by an unalterable law of human intelligence, the whole series of abstractions, from the lowest to the highest, must be gone through in consecutive order. On the other hand, if man were to pass over a single one of the abstractions in question, his ideas of virtue and happiness would not be entirely cleared of heterogeneous elements. They would remain more or less encumbered with sensible things, with things extraneous to their essence. Consequently, he would in the end have failed

to attain to a perfect knowledge and a purely spiritual love of virtue, and to a perfect rule to guide him to the possession of that happiness which endures for ever.

335. But in order that mankind might have the time necessary for completing all this series of abstractions —for meeting with suitable opportunities of observing all these things separated from one another in reality, so as to be able to make the requisite comparisons between them, and note the differences; and, finally, for rendering these operations familiar to themselves, and applying them to all the cases that might occur— a long course of ages was needed. Nor did they need less time for bringing themselves into a disposition to bear those trials which might be imposed on them as the practical result of each consecutive abstraction. Unquestionably, it takes man a long time, ordinarily speaking, not only to develop his mind, but also to acquire an habitual readiness to submit to hardship. It is only by degrees that he grows strong in virtue, and, following up the light made ever purer and purer by his mental abstractions, so ennobles and intensifies his love as to give it prevalence over sensible impressions.

336. Love, being a rational act, presupposes knowledge. So long, therefore, as men were not in possession of a pure knowledge of virtue, they could not love virtue for its own sake alone—in other words, with a love wholly spiritual. And yet, even supposing them to have obtained such knowledge, it does not follow that their love could instantly be excited and raised to a high degree of intensity.

Love requires a decree of the will; but when the

will has decreed, love does not reach perfection all at once. It requires time. It kindles little by little, until, by continued fanning, it bursts at last into a flame. So with the love of virtue and happiness wholly divested of their accidental surroundings. First, a thoroughly purified knowledge of their nature must be fixed in the mind, and this takes a very long time. Then there must come the volition, strong and determined, and this also is a thing that cannot be withdrawn from the laws of time. Only after this, that is to say, after very protracted and oft-repeated acts and efforts, can the love of pure virtue and happiness rise to that height of fortitude which gives it strength to overcome all the allurements of sensible things. Such at least is the ordinary course which love pursues, if not in each individual, certainly in humanity at large. A long time, therefore, must have elapsed before it could run through all this course, and so reach perfection in the end.

337. But here it may well be asked: Was it possible for man, furnished as he is with a nature so weak and frail, to attain to such lofty virtue, to such predominating love as you describe?

I answer: Not, certainly, by his own feeble powers. The abstraction of virtue, even if it could be obtained by man's natural mental force, is too shadowy and, as it were, too aërial a thing, and man's heart would never be satisfied with uniting itself in perpetuity to so languid a phantom, in preference to the things which he sees with his eyes, and touches with his hands. Only the grace of the Redeemer could add body and reality to that abstraction by showing in it God Himself; only the grace of the God-Man could

re-invigorate the will and re-kindle the fire of an immeasurable love in the frozen heart of man.

This operation of grace, however, went hand in hand with that of nature, and assisted it. Like that of nature, therefore, it followed the law of time. Its successive steps are these:—

338. In the first place, it aided man to purify the idea of virtue from all things merely sensible, to get quite rid of which it was necessary that man should go through the whole series of the observations and experiences which we have described above—a process of very long duration.

Secondly: A perfectly pure idea of virtue being thus attained, grace could render it efficacious by divinizing it; for so soon as man perceived with his mind the beauty of the Divine Reality which was now conjoined with that idea, his mind would begin powerfully to feel the force of virtue, and to have a keen relish of its ineffable sweetness. Thirdly: Man's will having now become capable of a sublime love, grace could move it to determine itself thereto, and could render it constant in its action, and hence capable of actually producing that most pure, unlimited, invincible love, of which we have been speaking.

339. From all these considerations we can understand how it was that the God of infinite goodness, fully knowing that human nature which He had created, did not from the very beginning impose on man so difficult a duty as that of abstracting altogether from human goods, especially from paternity and from nationality. He did in this as the wise agriculturist of whom the poet sings:

"Ac dum prima novis adolescit frondibus ætas,
Parcendum teneris: et dum se lætus ad auras
Palmes agit, laxis per purum immissus habenis,
Ipsa acies nondum falcis tentanda." (1)

340. Did God, however, on this account, leave man without the chance of practising virtue? Did He deprive him of religion, of happiness, of union with Himself? By no means. On the contrary, with wisdom truly divine, He found the way of associating with temporal advantages the sublime cult of sacrifice, and making them all admirably subservient to the same.

341. It is true that this could not be accomplished except by a profusion of miraculous interventions. For, if man had at that time seen his virtue receive a merely natural reward, his thought could not have soared so high as continually to view through them that Supreme Mind which had disposed all things at the beginning; since no occasion would then have been afforded him for discriminating between the forces of nature and Him Who was directing and sustaining them. His faculty of abstraction required, therefore, to be aided in this also by means of external objects, in which he might see things separated one from the other, and might thus learn to discriminate between them when they presented themselves to him blended together. He required to observe on the one hand the action of nature, and on the other the action of God

(1) Virgil, Georg. II. 362—365.—"In the time of their young growth and their first leaves you should spare their infancy, and even when the vine-branch is pushing its way exultingly into the sky, launched into the void in full career, the tree should not as yet be operated on by the pruning-hook" (Conington).

in the prodigies which suspended the laws of nature, that so he might fully distinguish, first, nature from God, and then, in the spectacle presented by nature, what nature did by its own forces, and what was done in it by the Supreme Mind; in short, that he might fully distinguish the *physical forces* from *the direction they followed*, in virtue of a wise distribution of all beings made from the beginning of the world. Virtue and vice were, therefore, at the time we speak of, accompanied by sensible and often miraculous rewards and punishments, in order that man might by these means, as by signs and language adapted to his condition, be taught the excellence of virtue and the contemptibleness of vice, and at the same time might not attribute anything to himself, or to an unknown cause acting in nature, but might ascribe all to that God Who was surrounding him with prodigies.

342. Hence we find that God at a very early period identified His worship with the vicissitudes of a family, thus rendering it *domestic*. In the house of the Patriarchs, this form of religion continued until the people sprung from that house were mature enough to form a nation.

Then God made His Religion *national*(1)—that is to say, He identified it in a wonderful manner with all the interests and the vicissitudes of one chosen nation.

But when the minds of men had so far developed that they could separate not only the interests of the family from those of the nation, but also the interests

(1) According to this, it would seem quite plain that the theory, "An independent National Church," is, after the coming of Christ, a retrograde step of the human mind, wholly at variance with the law followed by God in the training and governing of humanity.—*Tr.*

of the nation from those of humanity at large, then man had reached the state of perfect maturity; "the fulness of times" had come, and JESUS CHRIST appearing on this earth, announced a Religion wholly separated from earthly interests, wholly spiritual. This Religion, therefore, stands on a footing all its own; it is as independent of flesh and blood as God is.

343. For this Religion, then, had men to be educated by Providence; and Providence, to obtain this end, made use of caresses and of stripes; that is to say, of corporal goods and corporal evils wisely apportioned. And herein it is easy to notice a second divine decree which may be expressed as follows:—

THAT SO LONG AS MAN'S FACULTIES WERE NOT SUFFICIENTLY DEVELOPED, THE SENSIBLE GOODS BESTOWED ON HIM AS A REWARD OF HIS FAITH AND OBEDIENCE SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO CONFIRM HIM IN THE WILLINGNESS TO DO WHATEVER IT MIGHT ULTIMATELY PLEASE GOD TO MAKE KNOWN TO HIM, THOUGH HE COULD NOT KNOW IT AT PRESENT; THAT THUS HE MIGHT BE DISPOSED TO EMBRACE IMPLICITLY THE PERFECT VIRTUE OF THE REDEEMER; AND SO OBTAIN ETERNAL LIFE.

344. In truth, God regulates temporal goods and evils, as we can see in the Jewish people, in accordance with the weakness of men, and with their greater or less mental development; yet always in view of the great end of imparting to them spiritual instruction and leading them to that sublime virtue which is destined to vanquish all things. For, as we have already observed, this height of virtue is not gained by man all at once; and hence grace is given him with the same gradation which his nature follows in its

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development. What God requires of him is, not to regard nature as alone sufficient for his needs, and to acknowledge his own absolute inability to be re-united with God without aid from Him. Now, this reunion of man with God is effected by Faith in God's word; for, unless God had spoken first, man would have had no means of raising himself up to Him. *Grace*, therefore, is given according to the measure of Faith; and as the measure of Faith is proportionate to that of *revealed truth*, it follows that Grace is given in the same proportion as Revelation. (1) Accordingly, the Grace of pre-Christian times was limited to enabling man to expect the coming of the Messiah, and to accept implicitly whatever He should teach; whereas the new Grace extends to enabling him to believe explicitly what the Messiah has taught, and to rely firmly on the fulfilment of His infallible promises. Pre-Christian believers, therefore, were disposed to embrace, through a kind of implicit Faith, that sublime spirituality which the Messiah was afterwards to preach, but which they, with the exception of a very few Saints, did not understand, and which we Christians do understand.

345. How ingenious, then, if I may use the expression, is the Divine Goodness; how condescending, and, as it were, self-accommodating to all the gradations of human nature, to all the various states through which this nature passes! Two conditions were indispensable for bringing about man's salvation after the fall of our first parents. First, it was requisite that man should be

(1) For some explanation of what the Author merely hints at in this place, see his *Supernatural Anthropology*, ("Antropologia Soprannaturale,") Vol. I., Bk. I., ch. vii., Art. iii., §§ 3, 4.—Also his *Introduction to St. John's Gospel* ("Introduzione del Vangelo secondo Giovanni"), Lesson xx.—*Tr.*

possessed of a virtue so pure as to involve the complete sacrifice of his corrupt self, and an offering of all earthly goods in satisfaction to offended Divine Justice. Secondly, it was necessary that this most pure virtue, wholly free from earthly accretions, wholly spiritual, should form the one sole aim of all his actions, the ultimate term of all his desires. But how could he aspire to that which he could not even know, of which it was so difficult for him to form an idea? Must, then, all those perish who have to live on this earth during all that period in which their intellectual faculties are not sufficiently developed to rise to abstractions of so elevated an order?—By no means; God found the way to save man in all states and in all times, and always through the humiliation of all human nature. In other words, He found the way to satisfy those two great conditions of human salvation. For, when humanity is capable of rising to the abstractions of pure virtue, He saves it by teaching it to make a sacrifice of nature to God, as is done by the disciples of the Crucified; and during that period in which it is still unable to soar so high, He saves it by infusing into it a readiness of will to do whatsoever God shall teach or command; consequently, to submit also, by implication, to this sacrifice, so extremely repugnant to nature, which the Divine Exemplar of men had first to offer on the tree of the cross. This was the state of those ancient just who were living in longing expectation and desire of the Redeemer.

346. The third decree of the Divine Wisdom for the fulfilment of the second law, of which we are speaking, would seem to have been this:—

THAT SO LONG AS MAN'S FACULTIES ARE NOT SUFFI-

CIENTLY DEVELOPED, HE MUST BE AIDED TO DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL GOOD BY MEANS OF TRIBULATIONS APPORTIONED TO HIM ACCORDING TO THE MEASURE OF HIS CAPACITY AND OF THE GRACE BESTOWED ON HIM.

Indeed, it is by afflictions that God, to use the language of Holy Scripture, is wont to tempt, prove, and purify His Saints. These men of Faith being, on the one hand, fully convinced that nothing happens in this world save by the most righteous and adorable Will of God; and, on the other, seeing that their virtue is accompanied by temporal reverses, conclude that there must be reserved for virtue, in another world, a happiness infinitely higher than any that could be enjoyed in the present life. God confirms them in this belief by His own infallible promises. In this way they go on gradually rendering their idea of true happiness more and more pure; and at the same time, the experiences they make of the frailty of human and natural things—the joy that springs from the consciousness of their fidelity and fortitude, and that ineffable heavenly sweetness which the "Spirit of all consolation" spreads abroad in their inmost souls—have the effect of detaching their hearts by little and little from all things mortal, until at last they feel an utter contempt for such, and cling as to their treasure, a treasure of priceless value, to the naked cross of their Saviour.

347. The plain outcome, then, of all that has been said above, is this, that the principle on which temporal good and temporal evil are apportioned on this earth is not the same for all classes of men. With the perfect, God follows simply the first of the laws which we have expounded (ch. xxv—xxvi). With the imper-

fect (and there are now many nations in this state, nations which are being prepared for the call to Faith), He makes use also of the second law (ch. xxvii—xxviii). As regards those men who rely exclusively on their own natural resources, He leaves them entirely to the action of the laws of human nature (ch. xviii—xix); but as regards those who dare to rise in opposition to His kingdom, like a champion armed for battle, He combats and brings them to naught (319).

ON

DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

BOOK III.

ὑπερ-φυσικός

THE LAW OF THE LEAST MEANS APPLIED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

Ego SAPIENTIA—*quando præparabat cœlos, aderam; quando certa lege et gyro vallabat abyssos; quando æthera firmabat sursum, et librabat fontes aquarum; quando circumdabat mari terminum suum, et legem ponebat aquis, ne transirent fines suos; quando appendebat fundamenta terræ* CUM EO ERAM CUNCTA COMPONENS *et delectabar per singulos dies, ludens coram eo omni tempore, ludens in orbe terrarum:* ET DELICIÆ MEÆ, ESSE CUM FILIIS HOMINUM.

—*Prov.* viii. 12, 27–31.

ON
DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

RECAPITULATION OF THE TWO PRECEDING BOOKS.

348. In taking up anew this work after an interval of many years,* I must first of all resume the thread of my reasoning by a brief recapitulation.

In the two preceding books, Divine Providence was vindicated in two different ways, viz., by *negative arguments* in the first book, and by *positive arguments* in the second. The negative arguments were directed to show that every allegation which man presumes to bring against the supreme Providence of the Creator and Ruler of the world is simply of no force—in fact, is nothing elsé than an exhibition of presumptuous ignorance. The reason is, that the human mind, however great one might suppose its powers to be, must always, by the very nature of the case, remain incom-

* See the Author's Preface.—*Tr.*

petent to undertake such an enormous task as that of judging of the government of the world, or of the dispensation of good and evil which the All-wise therein ordains. The positive arguments went to prove that evil, whether considered in its existence, or in that distribution which we actually see, is in no way opposed to the Divine attributes of Sanctity, Justice and Goodness; nay, when our natural reason, in dealing with the question of evil, avails itself of the powerful aid afforded it by the teachings of supernatural Revelation, those attributes are found to shine forth with a new and most dazzling splendour.

349. As to the *Sanctity* and the *Justice* of God, it seems to me that after the things already said, no doubt or suspicion can remain in the minds of those who have understood them. For the Divine Sanctity is seen to be perfectly free from reproach, the moment we realize to ourselves the fact that evil has nothing whatever to do with the Divine Nature; inasmuch as it consists simply in a defective action of created beings—a kind of action so inherent in finite natures, that these cannot be conceived otherwise than as liable to it, whereas no such liability is conceivable in God. Hence as God, because infinite, necessarily excludes from Himself all evil, and is therefore holy and perfect by essence, so He cannot create a being not subject to fall into evil; because He cannot do absurdities, and it would be an absurdity to say, either that a created being is infinite, or that it is free from that possibility of evil which follows necessarily from its limitation.

In like manner, all allegations brought against the *Justice* of God, on the score of the permission and distribution of evil, fall to the ground as soon as one

grasps this truth, that the cause of evil lies in the created natures themselves, and chiefly in those which are possessed of freedom to do either right or wrong. For, as justice consists in leaving to others what belongs to them, so injustice consists in taking it from them without their consent. Now, to suffer finite beings to act according to their own nature, and still more to act freely, is certainly not to deprive them of what belongs to them; therefore it is not an injustice. And as finite natures, in consequence of their limitation, are the cause of evil, so they are the cause of its distribution; since evil naturally distributes itself by the same means by which it is produced.

350. But as regards the Divine *Goodness*, I strove to vindicate it by a longer line of argument. Nevertheless, this theme is so beautiful, so grand, and so marvellously rich in matter for thought,(1) that I cannot resist the impulse to invite the special attention of the reader to it again, in this third book. I think indeed that the arguments already brought forward ought to suffice to

(1) It may perhaps not be uninteresting to the reader if we record here a little incident that happened whilst this book was being dictated by the Author at Stresa. The anecdote is thus related by the late Fr. Signini: "In an afternoon walk with the writer of these lines, Rosmini suddenly stopped (as he was accustomed sometimes to do), and after expressing the intense delight he found in the beauty of the subject he had then in hand, added these precise words: 'To do full justice to this subject it would be necessary to write *thirty* books. I have in my mind the materials, but how can it be done? Time is so short, and there are so many other things to be done! We must content ourselves with the *minimum* possible.' The writer would be sorry were any one to take these words as a mere piece of random talk; for he can certify, from his own personal knowledge, that Rosmini, however warm his feelings might be, always strictly measured the language he used in conversation."—*Tr.*

convince any reasonable person that everything which occurs in the universe is a sign and a proof of the Supreme Goodness of the Creator. But man is weak. The truths expounded being of a very elevated and wholly spiritual order, the bright light in which they at first presented themselves to his mind may gradually become dimmed by the distracting impressions which sensible things continually make upon him, and, as a consequence, the firmness of his adhesion to those truths may diminish in the same proportion. My fervent hope is, therefore, that it will be no waste of time to bring forward a fresh array of arguments, and to lay bare the futility of the last and most plausible of the objections which can be urged in this matter; that so the salutary truths under consideration may be more firmly and deeply engraven on the mind.

351. This appears to me all the more important for the very reason that the exalted idea which men form to themselves of God and of His Goodness, is peculiarly apt to lead them to expect from God certain things, which, although they seem to befit a Being who is both infinitely good and omnipotent, are, in reality, neither good nor indeed deserving to be called "things" at all, because they involve self-contradiction. This arises from their idea of the Deity being too vague and confused. For example, it is no uncommon thing to hear some such language as the following: "The Goodness of God is infinite, and so is His Power: why then does He not free us from all evils and fill us with every kind of good? He could do it if He would; and how much better for us all, and more in accordance with His Goodness would that be!"—This objection, which has in it such an appearance of truth that even pious men

are wont to rebut it rather by an act of adoring faith than by the force of reasoning, I have not altogether passed over. Certainly, it is most reasonable that those who believe in God should also believe that He never can fail to act with infinite goodness, even where short-sighted human reason seems to see the contrary. But this was not enough. Convinced that human reason itself, if it investigates with rectitude and with perseverance, can, at least when strengthened by Revelation, find the way to entirely dispel that objection, and can discover that its source lies purely in the ignorance and superficiality of those who propose it, I made it my duty in the preceding book to advance some arguments directed against such false reasoning. Briefly summed up in another form, the arguments were these.

352. The objection urged assumes that whenever God sees that His creatures, left to act with their own powers and in accordance with the laws of their nature, are about to fail, He ought Himself to interfere in such a way as to suspend their action, or rather, to keep it steadily up to the mark, and so prevent that failure. It brings us, therefore, face to face with the great question of the intervention of God in creation, I mean, of the application of that wholly supernatural action in which God Himself is the immediate agent, and the effect of which consists in modifying the action of natural things. As the present book is to be mainly devoted to the discussion of this question, with a view to its solution, the reader will see why I have called it *hyper-physical* (ὑπερ-φυσικός). In the preceding book this discussion was only commenced.

353. It was there observed that all things which have

been or can be created, are, because of their finite nature, necessarily liable to evil. This at once disposed of the allegation that the beings forming the universe ought to have been made by God better than they are. For, setting aside the fact that man cannot truly desire that other beings had been created instead of himself or that his nature were more perfect than it is (217 and note), whatever the other substances in question might have been, they could not have been free from that liability to fail, which is inseparable from all that is limited, and in which lies the origin of all evil. Then we pointed out, as a necessary consequence of the same principle, that, no matter how beings had been distributed at the beginning of the world, or what kind of connexion had been established between them, evil could not have been avoided. From this we concluded that the only way in which God, in distributing and linking together the various natures which form the universe, could have acted with infinite goodness and wisdom, was by disposing them in such a manner that they should result in the production of the greatest amount of net good, that is, of good obtainable after deducting from it the evil which it was altogether impossible to prevent.

354. This, however, is not precisely the difficulty of which we are speaking. What the objectors mean is, not the intervention of God in the disposal of things at the moment of creation, but the intervention of His action in the universe already created. They pretend that He ought continually to assist His creatures so as always to protect and sustain them against falling into evil. Such is the common objection, and it is against this that our remarks must now be specially directed.

355. With this end in view, I made two remarks in the preceding book. In the first place, the question was confined to the good and evil of men; because the good and evil of those beings which have no intelligence, such as the material and the purely sensitive, are not, properly speaking, good and evil, save in relation to man; and also because the complaints which men make against Divine Providence regard their own evils, being in fact nothing else than the expression of their grief. In the second place, I observed, that in order to know whether the deliverance from evil afforded to man by the intervention of a direct Divine action would be of true advantage to him, it was necessary first of all to know what human nature is, what its limitations. These limitations were therefore studied, with the result that man, constituted as he is, could not obtain certain kinds of good, unless on the condition of being subjected to certain evils. Whence it was inferred that the screening of man from evil is not always the act of supreme goodness which it appears to be at first sight; but that it is so only when it does not entail the loss of goods which are more desirable, or at least not less desirable than the cessation of that evil. So true is this, that if man himself were offered his own choice in the matter, and knew well the relative bearings of those goods and evils, he would unhesitatingly prefer having the two together to being deprived of both. For, goods and evils, pleasures and pains find in the soul a common measure in which they are confronted together, thus enabling man to strike the balance, with the result that one sole feeling is left in him, of satisfaction or of dissatisfaction, according as he finds the

balance to be on the side of good, or on that of evil. (1)

If this were not so, how could man rejoice, as he often does, at a paltry gain which costs him untold labour and toil? How could the merchant commit his life and his fortunes to the ocean wave, and when he has safely brought back his ship laden with a precious freight, count as nothing the troubles, the anxieties, the dangers, the sicknesses, and the thousand other inconveniences which befell him during his long voyage, fully satisfied with the addition he has made to his wealth? Or how could that which the world calls glory, a good which after all is more imaginary than real, be held in such high esteem that many hesitate not to purchase it even by death?

It should be attentively considered that when the brave veteran, for example, returns to his native village, shows to his neighbours gathered around him the scars of the wounds he received in many a battle, and relates the hair-breadth escapes he had in those bloody encounters, he experiences a pleasure, the like of which, whether as to kind or degree, it would be impossible for him to feel, unless he had really suffered the smart of the wounds, and had by his courage overcome the cruel fear of death. So, likewise,

(1) See the Author's work entitled *Society and its Aim* ("La Società ed il suo Fine"). Bk. IV., Ch. viii.—There he shews how pleasures and pains, although they appear so different in their natures that one would hardly think it possible to find a common measure for them, are nevertheless confronted, weighed, and measured together in the most simple unity of the human soul, leaving man either satisfied or dissatisfied, as the case may be. It is by this effect, of *satisfaction or dissatisfaction*, and not by pleasures and pains taken singly, that we must be guided, if we wish to form a true judgment as to whether a man be in a good or a bad, a happy or an unhappy state.

the fortune which one has succeeded in realizing by industrious labour, patient endurance, long privations, and careful savings, brings with it a peculiar delight which could in no wise be felt in the case of even greater wealth received merely as a gift, or as an inheritance.

The truth, then, is that there are for man certain pleasures which are the fruit and consequence of certain sufferings, and naturally so conjoined with these, that it would be impossible, even for God, Who does not do absurdities, to separate them. Indeed, how could God cause a man to experience that joy which he derives from the consciousness of being the author of his own good, if he were not the author of it? How could He cause the millionaire to delight in the thought of having accumulated his wealth by his own hard exertions, and by his proving himself superior to the greatest of difficulties, if that wealth had cost him nothing? How make the veteran to feel proud of himself as, in his old age, he thinks of his former prowess, of his courage and valour in the fight, and of his steady endurance of the hardships of the soldier's life, if he had never been in the ranks, and all his days had been passed in the quiet retirement of a comfortable home? Is, then, God to lead man into a belief of his having overcome pains and dangers which have never existed? To suppose this would be to change Him Who is by essence Truth itself, into a foul deceiver: another absurdity. His Goodness would not in that case be true goodness, because He would not be a truthful God.

It must therefore be admitted that certain human goods are only the effect of certain evils, and that human nature itself is content to have them in this

way, rather than not have them at all. And if human nature is satisfied, why should there be any complaints? No, these complaints are not made by human nature, but only by some individuals, who are not in this her faithful interpreters, who do not consult her real desires, but merely follow certain abstract and deceitful speculations of their own.

356. Let it also be borne in mind that the necessity of certain evils for gaining certain most desirable goods is precisely one of the limitations inherent in a finite nature. For, it would indeed be a vulgar error to suppose that the concept of limitation applies only to bodies. Every finite nature has special limits of its own, and their quality and form cannot be known save by observing each nature separately, how it is formed, what are its endowments, to what laws it is subject. Hence, as bodies have a limit of extension, so living beings have their limits in the laws of feeling, which is their constitutive form; while man, a being composed of matter, feeling, and intelligence, partakes of the limits belonging to these three elements, and has, besides, those limits which result from their relations, and from the links, physical and dynamical, which unite them together.

Whilst, therefore, the Infinite Being essentially enjoys all good without limitations of any kind, the good of finite beings can be had only with certain fixed conditions. Thus it comes about that there is for each of these beings a good peculiar to itself, so that no other kind or form of good would be suitable for it. This gives us the clue to the right way of putting the question: "How God ought to proceed in His treatment of man, or any other of His creatures in

order that He may truly be said to act with infinite goodness." It would be a mistake simply to inquire whether God deprives a given being of any kind of good, or allows it to be subjected to any kind of evil, thinking at once that this is at variance with the notion of an infinite goodness. The real points to be ascertained are: 1st. Whether He bestows on that being the good which is peculiar to it, suitable to its nature; 2nd. Whether He bestows such good in the highest degree; and 3rd. Whether it would or would not be possible for the same good to attain its highest degree without having some evil mixed up with it. Unquestionably, from Him Whose Goodness is infinite we have a right, indeed we ought to expect a supreme good; but this good should be considered, not in the abstract, but in reference to the being on which it is bestowed; since the good which does not suit a given being is, for it, no good at all, is not desired nor willed by it. Hence the question must be confined to investigating what is the good peculiar to the finite being of which one speaks, and how and when that species and form of good may be said to be supreme in its kind. It is precisely by applying this principle to man that we find that the good peculiar to him cannot be conceived as having reached its highest perfection, save on condition of being preceded or accompanied by certain evils which aid in forming and completing it; and that therefore the existence of evils on this earth, instead of derogating from the Goodness of God, is a proof of it.

357. What is said here of the individual man, is equally applicable to humanity taken as a whole. For, as by examining the nature of the individual we

discover that he could not obtain certain goods which he prizes most highly, unless he were subjected to certain evils, whose negative value, as measured in his soul, is vastly inferior to the positive value of those goods; so does it happen with humanity in general. Man's nature could not fully develop all its faculties, nor acquire a profound knowledge of itself, nor attain to the summit of civilization, of the various virtues, of prosperity in its several forms, if it were not exercised with the experience of misfortunes, with the goad of needs and of sufferings, with an incessant struggle against difficulties, but above all, with that sublime warfare—a spectacle so pleasing in the sight of the All-wise and All-good—in which virtue, armed with nothing but its own intrinsic worth, combats and vanquishes material force, the might of the impious, the crushing load of adversity. In another work, I have undertaken to show that a government, to be perfect, must tend to produce in the community ruled by it a state of things in which human nature, on the balance being struck between the sum of the goods which it enjoys, and the evils which it suffers, shall be found in possession of the *maximum* of net good, no matter how that good may be distributed, even though it should have to be accumulated in a small number of individuals, and some individuals should, on that account, have to remain in a state of misery. (1) Now,

(1) This most important rule, available for measuring the degree of the goodness of a government, deserves all attention. See *Society and its Aim* ("La Società ed il suo Fine"), Bk. IV., Ch. x.

[The Translators would much wish, if it were possible, to insert here the whole of the long Chapter referred to in this note. They think it right, however, to observe in particular, that by saying that "the *maximum* of net good might even, in certain cases, have to be accumulated in a few in-

the one sole aim of Divine Providence is to direct its government to the greatest good of mankind taken in its entirety; and if such good cannot be obtained without the loss of some individuals, the cause lies, not in any want of Goodness in God, but solely in the limitation of that nature which He intends to benefit in the highest degree.

358. Such is the substance of the principles on which in the second book I grounded my vindication of the Goodness of the Supreme Providence; and they all point to the conclusion that, although the Goodness of God is unlimited, and therefore disposed to bestow every good and to remove every evil, human nature is not unlimited, nor capable of receiving in itself every kind of good free from every kind of evil, so that it limits, if I may so speak, the Divine Goodness, and prevents It from obtaining that fulness of effect which It would otherwise produce. The truth of these principles as well as their efficacy for dissipating the objections raised against the Divine Goodness, was rendered still more manifest by some special applications which we made of them to man, and of which the following is a brief summary.

359. These applications start from the following general principle: "It belongs to the perfection of a being to be itself the author of its own good."

This principle applies not to man alone, but to all things without exception; it follows from the intrinsic order of being, and is therefore one of those which we call *ontological* principles. It deserves to be attentively

dividuals," the Author does not by any means imply that it is not the duty of a good government to do all that is possible, by legitimate means, for securing the well-being of the largest number.]

considered for this reason, that it gives rise to a new condition for the action of Divine Goodness. In fact, we can see from it that that goodness, to be supreme, must not limit itself to bestowing good on man, but must furthermore act in such a way as to enable man to become the author and cause of his own good; since if this were not so, he would be deficient in one of the highest excellences of human nature.

360. Now all human good may be reduced to two classes: *moral good* and *eudemonological good.* Man, aided by God, may make himself in a way the author of the one as well as of the other—a prerogative dear and precious to him beyond all others. For the Goodness of God, therefore, towards man to be supreme, and for it to correspond with the aspiration of man's nature, it ought to bestow on him only what he could not procure by himself, and to assist him in procuring all that he can.

361. But the order of these two classes of good is, that the *eudemonological* must follow the *moral* as its necessary appendage. This order is an eternal law of justice, and is itself an ontological principle, because contained in the universal order of being. Indeed, it never can be true that a being is well ordered and happy, who possesses the *eudemonological* good alone, without the *moral*, or who would make the latter merely subservient to the former—a disorder which would cause the moral good instantly to disappear. Hence it follows that the Goodness of God in promoting man's welfare could not be supreme, unless it maintained this moral order—unless it directed its cares to render him, first, virtuous by *moral* good, and then happy by the addition of *eudemonological* good.

362. Moreover, the same goodness, to be truly supreme, must lead man to procure for himself a supreme moral good. To know, therefore, how it behoved the goodness of the Supreme Being to proceed in its dealings with man, two things must be inquired into: 1st. What it was to do to render man in the highest degree the author of his own moral good; 2nd. What it was to do to make the moral good so produced by man supreme, namely, the greatest possible.

363. Now, as regards the first of these two things, man is the author of his own moral good in virtue of his free-will. Consequently, the goodness of God to man could not be supreme, unless it left him free to choose his own course—nay, unless it left him this freedom, or, as it is technically called, *liberty of indifference*, in the largest possible measure; since *merit*, supposing its other conditions not to be wanting, is greater in proportion as man's liberty is greater. Generally speaking, therefore, it was not fitting that God in moving man to moral good should diminish his liberty, by taking away or diminishing its indifference; at least in those cases in which such diminution would not be compensated in the whole of humanity, or by an increase in the sum total of moral good produced in the universe.

364. As regards the second thing, namely, the greatness of the moral good which man was to produce, this increases in proportion to the greatness of the two elements of which it is the result—I mean: 1st. The effort made in obtaining it; 2nd. The Divine Object, which is the only good communicated from above to the mind and heart of man.

365. As regards the first of these two elements, it plainly involves the necessity of an *eudemonological* evil. For, the effort which man makes to be virtuous is all the greater, and consequently the moral good he gains by it is all the more precious, the greater the opposition, whether moral or physical, which he has to vanquish. By *moral*, I mean the opposition he encounters from the inclination to evil which he has in himself, and with which are associated the allurements of sensible pleasure, which also must be overcome; and by *physical*, the opposition arising from corporal and temporal evils, which the practice of virtue renders it sometimes necessary to withstand. From this double opposition there accrues to man an increase of moral good in two ways:—

1st. By the effort he makes in overcoming pleasure and pain. This effort is an act of great love towards morality, a practical homage rendered to the superiority of this over other goods, which for its sake are despised, a homage which terminates in God as that Being Who is subsistent Goodness itself. Thus the degree of effort which man makes in gaining virtue, marks the degree of intimate union between himself and the eternal principle of virtue. For, the moral good acquired by man may be greater or less in *intensity* as well as in *extent;* and the effort requisite to acquire it heightens the first without increasing the other, for the effort which virtue costs makes it take the deeper root in man without necessarily extending its growth; without changing the species of good, it renders man's union with it all the more close.

2nd. The more man gives of his own, so to speak,

the more he sacrifices of his *eudemonological* good that he may gain moral good, the larger credit does he acquire with Eternal Justice, whose inviolable law is, that he who suffers for the sake of righteousness and in order that he may become possessed of it, gives, and even throws away as dirt, everything he loves on earth, shall not go without compensation. This law of compensating and remunerating justice, rests on the ontological principle that "Being under the *moral* form, placed in opposition to being under the *real* form, (1) must ultimately triumph over the latter and receive from it infinite glory." Whence it logically follows, that he who renounces a *real* good for love of *moral* good, and, appreciating this immensely, is determined to have it at no matter what cost to himself, must in the end by his very loss be a gainer. If this were not so, if the lover of moral good were, on its account, to be deprived of the sensible good without advantage to himself, moral being would not fully triumph over the reality of merely sensible good. Hence it is that Eternal Justice has a most abundant retribution in store for the virtuous sufferer; so that he finds at last, that the good which he renounced in order to acquire virtue was not lost, but exchanged for a

(1) The Author distinguishes three forms, or modes, of being, the ideal, the real, and the moral. By ideal being he understands being in as far as it is knowable, or intelligible. By real being he understands being that feels, or is felt, or that in any way modifies feeling. By moral being he understands the relation of harmony or disagreement between real and ideal being. See *Philosophical System* nn. 166, and foll.; also *Theosophy* ("Teosofia") Vol. I., nn. 147 and foll. It must be carefully borne in mind that all these three forms of being are realities in the sense that they are true entities, and that each really exists in its own form, though one could not exist without the others. See nn. 384, 385.—*Tr.*

greater; and what is more important, that which he generously gave (and it was God's gift), is recovered by him, no longer as a gift, but as a wage, no longer as a fortuitous acquisition, but as a credit of justice. Thus that *eudemonological* good which for the sake of moral good he had freely renounced, follows later on in the very train of that same moral good, wonderfully enhanced in dignity and splendour. Now, what could be more delightful to a man than to see himself encompassed with most precious *eudemonological* goods which he knows for certain are by Eternal Justice apportioned to him as his due, because they are the fruit of his labours, and therefore in a true sense his very own? On this principle is founded that proof of the existence of a future life alluded to above, a life the mere hope of which causes the Christian to experience a foretaste of bliss, even in this world.

366. From all these things, the truth of which cannot be called in question, it is plain that if the Goodness of God was to lead man to the attainment of the greatest possible good, it must place him, or permit him to be placed in a condition in which the acquisition of virtue would demand of him the GREATEST EFFORT and the GREATEST SACRIFICE, always, however, proportionate to his strength, and saving such other conditions of the greatest good, as would either presuppose or entail some further diminution of that effort and that sacrifice. The greatness of the effort would fulfil that moral condition which consists in the *intensity* of the act whereby moral good is sought and grasped; and the sacrifice, that is, the loss of *eudemonological* good, even although it did not cost any effort, would

also be of great advantage to man by rendering him a creditor with Divine Justice in respect of the good of which he had voluntarily deprived himself for the love of virtue, and for which he must, as we have seen, be abundantly compensated.

367. Now, that most noble kind of moral perfection which man attains by effort and sacrifice, brings with it many other advantages which he could not obtain except by submitting to the *eudemonological* evil which is involved in the labour of striving, and in privation and suffering.

First of all, in the great struggle which man sustains for the sake of virtue, and in the deprivation of other goods that he may gain virtue alone, he acquires an experimental and most efficacious knowledge of its sweetness and beauty. And since the highest virtue has God for its object, he acquires also an intimate knowledge of God Himself, finding by experience how contemptible all other things are in comparison with God, and how unworthy of being pursued by him, notwithstanding their apparent attractiveness; whereas they who have no such experience cannot know this sovereign good save by a kind of cold negative knowledge, like that which one obtains by hearsay or by vague rumour only.

Hence we find that God, in carrying out His great purpose of training man to virtue, made use of temporal evils as a preservative against the allurements of temporal goods, so dangerous to human weakness; while, on the other hand, He made use of temporal goods as a preservative against the opposite danger to which the same human weakness might be exposed from the pressure of temporal evils in the earlier ages of

the world, when man's mind had not risen to high abstractions, and was still incapable of understanding and relishing spiritual goods.

368. Another advantage which results to man from a virtue gained by hard struggles and by sacrifices, consists in the pleasing consciousness he has of his victory. Aware of having vanquished all things, he feels himself greater than all, and made like unto God through that divine virtue which God has communicated to him, and by which he has conquered. Hence a most exquisite and ineffable joy pervading his whole soul, and together with this, that powerful feeling of security which, as it were, places him, while still living on this earth, in heaven, whence he looks down contemptuously on the sensible world as by far too mean a thing for him.

369. Passing now to the second of the elements from which the greatness of the moral good man has to procure for himself must be derived, we saw that it consists of God Himself in so far as man partakes of Him. Granting the condition above mentioned, that "man's moral perfection is not supreme unless he himself be the author of it," it follows of necessity, that the communication which God made of Himself to man, in order to be such as to befit an infinite goodness, ought to have been made in accordance with these two laws:—

1st. That God should place no limit to that communication;

2nd. That it should be left to the free-will of man, aided and strengthened by God, to draw to himself the Divine good in however large a measure he might choose.

Thus, in virtue of the first law, the communication of good was, on the part of God, altogether unlimited, infinite; and, in virtue of the second law, man became possessed of the Divine good by his own acquisition, and could go on at will enlarging his possession up to the fullest capabilities of his faculties, nature, and efforts. God exhorted and stimulated him to do this by the great precept: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind." (1)

Now, that the Goodness of God followed these two laws in the dispensation of the Divine good to men, is seen clearly in the work of the Incarnation, wherein the Divine Word was personally conjoined with human nature. In this way the Word Himself was given to man and to all men as the great fountain, the inexhaustible spring from which the Divine good can be drawn without measure: and in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, in the Sacraments, in prayer, and in supernatural works, man has so many means of marvellous efficacy for producing all moral good and perfection, without any other limit than that which proceeds from the will and the action of man himself. For, the more use man makes of those means, and the better is his disposition of will, the more of this good and perfection does he draw from the fountain.

370. These were in substance the arguments with which in the preceding book I sought to vindicate the Goodness of God in permitting physical and *eudemonological* evil; and they seem to me to prove conclusively that this evil was necessary for enabling man to acquire a supreme moral perfection, from which there

(1) Matth. xxii. 37.

would most certainly follow every eudemonological good; and so the universe would obtain its most noble and most excellent end.

It would be to no purpose to object that the necessity of physical evil for the realization of supreme moral good has no place in God, in Whom this good exists without having been preceded or being accompanied by any evil whatever. For it must be observed, as has been said before, that in God moral good does not exist under the same conditions as it does in man. Moral good must not be considered alone, in the abstract, but as it is in God, and as it can be in man. The different natures in which it exists alter its conditions. In God, moral good is the Divine Nature, God Himself, eternal, absolute Act. In man, moral good is only an accident; it is not self-existent, but brought into act (with the aid of God) by man himself. Now, man cannot act otherwise than by means of his faculties and energies, and according to the laws of his nature. If then, in man, moral good is a production, one must consider how it is produced and made to exist, and we have seen that this is done through the acts of the will, more efficacious and more perfect in proportion as there is greater effort and sacrifice implied in them. This is, therefore, a condition of human virtue, not of the Divine.

371. But why did God permit moral evil also? He permitted it, as was pointed out, because moral evil also is a condition of a moral good which far outweighs it in the balance. To the fall of man we owe the work of Redemption, an infinite abyss of Divine Goodness. It may be allowed that God could, even without the fall, have become incarnate,—a thing altogether in har-

mony with the essence of the Supreme Goodness—and thus have communicated Himself in a supreme degree to His creatures. (1) But I do not speak of the work of the *Incarnation*, but of the *Redemption*. Redemption is the complete triumph of moral being over real and intellectual being, in so far as this is separated from it in the world of contingencies. Through Redemption, moral being vanquishes and subjugates real and intellectual being, which sought to dissever itself from it, leading it captive as a trophy to grace its triumph, and thus saving, elevating, perfecting it. Moral being, which triumphs over the rebellion of real and intellectual being, is the sanctity of God, the

(1) St. Thomas (S. p. iii., q. i., art. 1.) proves in general the fittingness of the Incarnation on the ground that God is the *essence of goodness*, and that it befits Him therefore to communicate Himself to creatures in a supreme degree. His argument runs as follows: "That is fitting for each thing to do which accords with its nature. Thus for example, it is fitting for man to reason, because this accords with his nature in so far as he is rational. Now, the nature of God is the very essence of goodness, as is shown by Dionysius *(De Div. Nomin.* c. i.). It follows that whatever accords with the nature of good is fitting for God to do. But it belongs to the nature of good to communicate itself to others, as is likewise shown by Dionysius (*Ibid.* c. iv.). Therefore it accords with the nature of Him who is the Supreme Good to communicate Himself to the creature in a supreme degree: and that is done chiefly by 'His conjoining a created nature with Himself in such a manner, that of the three things, the Word, the Soul and the Flesh, one person alone is formed,' as Augustine says (*De Trinit.* L. xiii., c. xviii.). Hence it is manifest that it was fitting for God to become Incarnate." This intrinsic reason of the fittingness of the Incarnation is equally valid whether we suppose man to have sinned or not. Nevertheless, we cannot say for certain what God might have done if man had persevered in the state of innocence; for, as St. Thomas observes a little further on (*Ibid.* art. 3), "Those things which, being above all that is due to the creature, proceed purely from the free will of God, cannot be known by us save in so far as they have been delivered in Holy Scripture, through which the Divine will is made known to us."

Sovereign Good, communicating itself to man despite the obstacle placed in its way by man's sin. The communication which God makes of Himself to sinful man by destroying sin, is an act of goodness infinitely greater than would be that of communicating Himself to man in the state of justice; and God, loving to give full scope to this extreme effusion of His Goodness, permitted sin. Nor was He content that such effusion, such display of the infinite magnificence of His beneficent Goodness, should be His own work alone. He would have man to be His co-operator therein, to become, together with Himself, the author of his own redemption; following here also the great principle referred to above, "That the greatest benefit which can be conferred on man consists, not simply in bestowing good on him, but in placing him in such a position that he may himself be the author of that good." With this intent "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," and a Man free from all sin and assumed into a Divine Person became the Redeemer of all other men enslaved to sin; and in order to redeem them He died. This act of beneficence on the part of the God-Man, and the Divine virtues which He practised in accomplishing the same, are a good of such inestimable value, that in comparison with it the evil of all the sins of the world counts as nothing; and well therefore might Infinite Goodness permit the fall which gave occasion thereto. Nay, I will go further: in the just balance of Divine Wisdom, the least moral good contained in the least of the sufferings of Christ must weigh more than the moral evil of all the sins which men have committed or which they could commit. Hence, by occasion of the sin permitted by God, there was

given to man in Christ a moral good so overwhelmingly great as to be beyond the possibility of calculation; so that, even if all other men were to perish eternally, the Humanity saved and glorified in Christ would not only compensate for that loss, but also exceed it in value beyond all measure.

372. This, however, was not the only advantage which Divine Wisdom had in view in permitting sin. To the moral good which was realized and accumulated in Christ through the merit of having given His life for the salvation of the world, we must add the result which followed from it, I mean the actual accomplishment of that salvation. For, through Faith in the Divinity of Christ and in His saving power, and through Baptismal Regeneration, sins are cancelled, and men, being incorporated in Him, become partakers of all His infinite treasures of good. Moreover, the application of His merits which takes place in Baptism is so steadfast that even the sins committed afterwards cannot entirely abolish it. For, they who fall into sin after being baptized, still retain the impression of that priestly character with which they were sealed in Baptism, and which renders them capable of obtaining the remission of their actual sins through the virtue and the Sacrament of Penance.

373. They can also obtain from Christ, chiefly by prayer, the grace of efficacious compunction, through which they become in a certain way redeemers of themselves. If the sinner had not been previously reformed by the virtue of Christ, he could never be converted to God; for he could not perform any act endowed with the virtue of satisfying Divine Justice, of finding God, the Sovereign Good, and taking hold

of Him. To be rendered capable of such supernatural act, the sinner must be succoured by the power of God Himself, and that power is administered to fallen man by Christ in Baptism. Herein we have indeed a manifest proof of the Infinite Goodness of God, and of the Supreme Charity of the Man-God to His fellowmen; whilst men in turn knowing full well that they could never have hoped to gain so great and so gratuitous a gift by themselves, find in it a powerful incentive to boundless gratitude, a most urgent motive for giving glory to the Saviour. This is, again, an immense moral good which it would not have been possible for them to enjoy unless they had been first redeemed from sin. Thus does the misery of sin prove once more, in the hands of God, a source of gain greater than the loss.

Furthermore, Christian adults are bound to have, of their own free-will, supernatural faith in Christ Who is made known to them; and the power of performing acts of this faith was received by them with the baptismal character. Hence, although they do not by their voluntary faith co-operate in impressing on themselves that character, which is solely the work of Christ, they co-operate in producing the fruit of faith, I mean their full justification. But there is also another way in which the baptized become, through Christ, the authors, as it were, of their own justification.

That is, as I have said, by repenting of their actual sins committed after Baptism. For, he who after being baptized falls into sin, may still have recourse to prayer, which will obtain for him the grace of true compunction, and to the Sacrament of Penance. And although the cleansing of the soul from sin belongs to God alone, nevertheless it belongs to the sinner to

approach the Sacrament and to place himself in the proper dispositions for receiving Absolution; so that it is true to say that, with the Divine aid, he freely co-operates in the work of his own justification.

374. Nay, properly speaking, all that the Sacrament of Penance duly received necessarily does, is to supply what it would be altogether beyond human power to do, and to give to the sinner the power of doing what he could not do if left to himself; that is to say: 1st, To remit mortal sin by the infusion of sanctifying grace; 2ndly, To remit eternal punishment; 3rdly, To strengthen the sinner against relapses. As soon as the sinner is freed by grace from mortal sin, he again has the power of gaining supernatural merit, and is therefore capable of practising the virtue of penance, both expiatory and meritorious. Then the exercises of penance, through the grace of God which accompanies them, can produce two effects: 1st, That of cancelling the relics *(reliquiæ)* that still remain of the sins remitted;(1) 2nd, That of satisfying for the temporal

(1) The celebrated President of the Council of Trent, Cardinal Stanislaus Hosius, in the excellent work in which he summarized the Catholic Faith in the name of the Synod of Petricow, held in 1551, sets forth very clearly this doctrine about the relics (*reliquiæ*) of sin, which often remain after the Sacrament of Penance has been received. His words are: "Nor is there a penalty alone remaining due after the guilt has been remitted, but the guilt itself is not abolished by the Sacrament of Penance so completely as not to leave behind it some vestiges (*reliquiæ*) to which a penalty is due" (*Confessio Catholicæ fidei Christiana*, etc., ch. xlviii). He proves this by the example of David, who, although he had been told by the Prophet Nathan that "The Lord had taken away his sin" (II. Kings, xii. 13), still prayed that God would blot out his iniquity and cleanse him more and more therefrom, because of the traces which sin, although remitted, had left in him. "David is not satisfied with the healing of his wound," says St. John Chrysostom (*In Ps.* to *Hom.* II.); he asks furthermore that the scar of that wound may be removed, and that he may be restored to his

punishment which remains due on account of those vestiges. (1) The tears of compunction, the contrition

pristine cleanness" (*Ibid*). Then the learned Cardinal thus proceeds:—"We see the same thing in Baptism, in which original sin is taken away in such a manner as to leave some traces of itself, namely, those disordered inclinations (*fomes concupiscentiæ*), which it is necessary to mortify by pious exercises during the whole course of our lives. So likewise with the Sacrament of Penance: there remain after it, as a kind of evil incentive (*fomes*), certain vestiges of sin which must be purged away by salutary satisfactions; and this especially if the sin should have passed into a habit: for, the more deeply sin has been rooted in the soul, the greater and the longer is the purgation it needs. For, as St. Bernard says, sin may be speedily washed away, but for the perfect healing of it a long course of cure is requisite (Serm. *de Cœna Dom.*)." In corroboration of the same doctrine, he quotes several great authorities: St. Athanasius (*de Blasphem. in Spir. S.*), St. Basil (Homil. *de Pœnit.*), St. Gregory of Nyssa (Orat: *Non esse dolendum ob eorum obitum qui in fide decesserunt*), Origen (*In Levit.*, c. viii.), St. Cyprian (Serm. *De eleemosyn.*), and others in great number. Now, these scars which Hosius calls "relics of preceding sins to which a penalty is due (*quibus pœna debetur*)" do not any longer fall under the concept of *guilt* (*culpa*), because the free-will repudiates them; yet they fall under the concept of *sin* (*peccatum*), habitual and venial, because the will still retains some inordinate attachment, to which sometimes it does not even advert, and of which, at all events, it cannot divest itself at once.

(1) The same Hosius, an authoritative interpreter of the Council of Trent and its President, expounds, in the work above quoted, the doctrine about the temporal punishment the debt of which remains after the pronouncing of the sacramental Absolution, in the following terms: "Satisfaction is made by fastings, almsdeeds, prayers, and other pious exercises of the spiritual life, not indeed for the eternal punishment, which, together with the guilt, is remitted either by the Sacrament or the desire of the Sacrament: but for the temporal punishment, which, as Holy Scripture teaches, is not always remitted entirely (as it is in the case of Baptism) to those who, ungrateful for the grace of God which they had received, have grieved the Holy Spirit, and have not been afraid to violate the temple of God." After referring to a number of weighty testimonies in proof of this necessity of penal exercises, he continues: "The aim of such satisfaction, however, is not to expiate the guilt or the eternal punishment; for, to do this belongs to Christ alone. He alone was made 'the propitiation for our sins,

and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world' (1. Jo. ii. 2). He alone by His death destroyed death; satisfied abundantly for our sins, reconciled us to His heavenly Father. It is not, then, of this satisfaction that we now speak, but of that which consists chiefly in those fruits of penance to which Christ vouchsafes the name of 'justice' (Matt. vi.). They are: fasting, prayer, and almsdeeds, whether undertaken by us of our own will, or enjoined on us by our Pastors, and the dispensers of the Sacraments. When this satisfaction is made from the motive of faith and of divine love, it extirpates the causes of our sins, it cancels the vestiges of sin, and remits the temporal punishment either wholly or in part. Lastly, it is also made for an example." This does not, however, detract anything from the merits of Christ. On the contrary, it shows His supreme goodness in rendering us, through those very merits, capable of satisfying in part for ourselves—a gift which raises us to the highest moral dignity; for by it we imitate Christ Himself, nay, become partners with Him in the very work of our Redemption. "True it is indeed" (continues the Cardinal), "that Christ made abundant satisfaction for our sins by suffering so many torments and even death itself. But does this mean that He suffered, that He made satisfaction in order that we—after falling away from that grace which we being dead together with Him, had received in Baptism (1. Peter, ii.)—might thenceforth suffer nothing, do nothing for our sins? Certainly not; but He gave us an example, that we might follow in His footsteps, that, as He, clothed with our flesh, but entirely free from all sin, carried His cross, so we also, contaminated as we are with so many sins, might carry our cross. It is of this that He admonishes us by saying: 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.' (Matth. xvi. 24.) St. Gregory, explaining those words of Samuel to Saul: 'Behold what is left, set it before thee.' (1. Kings, ix. 24), says 'It was indeed left, because Christ did not accomplish all that had to be done for us. For, by His cross He redeemed all men; but it remained that they who strive to be redeemed and to reign with Him should be crucified' (Lib. iv. *in libros Reg.*, c. iv.). He had in truth seen this residue, who said: 'If we suffer, we shall also reign together with Him.' (11. Tim. ii. 12.) As if he had said: 'That which Christ accomplished does not profit except those who accomplish that which remained to be done.' Hence Blessed Peter the Apostle says: 'Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps.' (1. Pet. ii. 21.) And St. Paul says: 'I fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh.' (Col. 1. 24.) Nevertheless, the penal satisfaction which man makes to Divine Justice has no value whatever save through the merits of Christ and through His grace." Let us hear the Cardinal again: "Here some one may say: 'Of what advantage, then, has the cross of Christ been to me, if I must still continually carry my own

of heart, the penal works, by which the penitent sinner strives daily to purify himself more and more, receive from the grace of God and the merits of Christ a virtue of such excellence that the Fathers do not hesitate to call it a laborious Baptism.(1) Now, these acts by which man makes satisfaction to God, amends, and, as it were, redeems himself from the consequences of sin, are moral goods of an infinite value, which would have been lost to humanity but for the permission of sin. It seems to me that it would be impossible for man under any other circumstances to perform an act so excellent, to feel so vividly in oneself the Goodness of God, to glorify and extol God so highly, as is done by the sinner who is converted from his iniquities. If, as we have seen, man's moral virtue consists in a movement which raises him up to the Supreme Good, evidently the sinner redeemed and aided by God is the fittest subject for the greatest virtue; for, the movement whereby he raises himself up from the depth of his iniquities to the summit of the Divine Sanctity, is the greatest, the most powerful that can be conceived, and requires the

cross, as if His had not sufficed?' I answer: It has been of great advantage. For, our cross would be of no use to us, neither should we derive any benefit therefrom, unless the cross of Christ had preceded it, by Whose merit our cross has all the value it has. In the same way also our satisfaction for sin would be of no avail, if it had not been preceded by the satisfaction of Christ, by Whose death and blood those things which we do in expiation for our sins are rendered efficacious and acceptable to God. Thus it is manifest that all the benefit which we receive from our satisfaction proceeds solely from the virtue, merit, and efficacy of Christ's Passion, the source and foundation of all our good works, which therefore are not more ours than they are Christ's, Who worketh in us and Who says: 'Without Me ye can do nothing.' (Jo. xv. 5.)"

(1) St. Jo. Damasc. Bk. iv., c. ix.

greatest effort and most complete sacrifice. In truth, the sinner who is converted, dies, and is resuscitated quite another man. This seems to me the reason why Christ said that there is more joy before the Angels of heaven upon one sinner doing penance than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance. (Luke xv.) This joy is felt also on this earth by all those souls who are zealous for the glory of God, and to whom therefore nothing is more gladdening than to see the conversion of even one sinner. If we ask sinners themselves who have returned to God with their whole heart—oh! what language could describe the sweetness of their tears? How delicious a balm soothes all their austerities and penances! And if to those who do not know their interior disposition they sometimes seem pitiless and cruel to themselves, this is because for them, sufferings, mortifications, the satisfactions they offer to God, have lost all asperity, nay, have become their most cherished treasure, their daily food, of which they never tire. A heavenly light gleams in their souls, and by that new light they know God all the more intimately, the more they have offended Him; they would almost annihilate themselves in order thus to restore to Him that honour and that love of which they have robbed Him; their only grief is that they cannot do this to the extent they would wish, and that all their affections, all their efforts to love Him are no worthy compensation for that love which they have denied Him, because those tokens of affection are always less than He deserves. Thus the keen sense, the profound and experimental knowledge which true penitents acquire of God and of themselves, the boundless gratitude which

takes possession of their hearts, the vehement and insatiable ardour with which they strive to restore outraged justice, and to make atonement to their offended God, are acts perfective of man, moral goods of the highest order, which humanity would not have attained if Divine Wisdom had not permitted sin. Well, therefore, may the Church exclaim: *O felix culpa quæ talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!*

375. But against this it will be urged: The infinite goods communicated by the Redeemer profit only those who are saved. Why has not the Gospel been announced to every individual human being? And why does God permit that many also of those to whom the Gospel had been announced, and who have been baptized and have believed, should fall into sin and even be lost?

I answer, 1st. It must not be supposed that they who without any fault of theirs have not attained to the grace of Baptism and of Faith, either because Christ was not announced to them, or because they died in infancy without Baptismal Regeneration, receive no benefit from the Redeemer. For, although Christ does not communicate to them the grace which raises man to the supernatural order; it is nevertheless certain, as I shall endeavour to shew elsewhere,(1) that He will restore to them their body, and what belongs to the order of the natural life, using on behalf of all the power and dominion He has over all flesh.

376. 2ndly. As regards the fact of God not communicating the supernatural grace of the Redeemer to every human individual, as also of His permitting the actual sins which men commit of their own free-will, and on

(1) See Appendix II.

account of which many are lost; the reason must be sought in the principle which we have indicated above (357) as the criterion whereby the goodness of a government should be estimated. That goodness, we said, to be supreme, must tend to produce the greatest good of the creatures governed taken in its sum total. Whether this good be accumulated or distributed, it makes no difference, provided only that justice be maintained equally with all. Hence, if the greatest good could not be obtained without permitting certain evils, it would be an act of supreme goodness to permit them. Sound reason, therefore, requires us to believe, that when the world shall have run its course, the net result of good in those who are saved in the supernatural order, *plus* the sum of good remaining in those who are not so saved—even after making full allowance for the evils that have been suffered by all human individuals throughout all time—will give a total of such magnitude as actually to constitute the *maximum* of good which the government of Providence could, consistently with the Divine attributes, obtain in mankind. Hence we are also bound to acknowledge that the very sins which men freely commit, together with the loss of the reprobate, were indispensable conditions to the attainment of so great a good. How this could be, was explained in the last part of the preceding book, where we saw that Divine Providence directs all events to the perfecting and the triumph of the Church of the Redeemer, which is the universal means whereby God obtains the end of creation, namely, the *maximum* of moral good, followed necessarily by the *maximum* of eudemonological good.

CHAPTER II.

OTHER AND MORE SUBTLE OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE VINDICATION OF PROVIDENCE AS GIVEN ABOVE.

377. Nevertheless, there remain certain objections which seem to throw a doubt on the validity of the vindication which we have so far given of the Divine Goodness. These objections appear very ingenious and subtle; but on this very account one can see all the more in them a manifest proof of the shortsightedness of human reason, which imagines itself to be propounding subtle and difficult truths, when in reality it is only endeavouring to mystify itself. Now, to present these objections in all their apparent force, and to expose their hollowness, will be the purpose of the present book.

378. With a view to make it clear that God governs mankind with supreme goodness, I began by laying down the principle that "His goodness would be supreme if it obtained the greatest amount of good which human nature, all things considered, can be made to produce." Then I went on to show that it would be impossible for a human being to have any valid reason for saying that this *maximum* of good is not actually obtained, and hence for denying or doubting any of the Divine attributes. In particular, it was pointed out that from the apparent irregularities observable in the government of Providence nothing can be concluded

against the existence of God, or in justification of the complaints which men afflicted by evils utter against Him. To demonstrate this, I observed that, of all the species of good, *moral* good is the most excellent, and that eudemonological good acquires the nature of complete good only when it follows the moral as its natural appendix. After this I considered the elements from which the greatness of the various kinds of good, but especially moral good, may be gathered and estimated; and the result of this investigation was, that, in order to form a correct estimate of this greatness, one must consider the good of which there is question, not merely in the abstract, but also in its practical bearing on man, in so far as man acquires it by the use of his own energies, so as to become the author of it to himself. The Supreme Good, at once moral and eudemonological, is God, the Infinite Good; but since it is necessary that man should unite himself to this good by his own acts, should possess himself of it by the use of his own energies (created by God Himself in him), and, on the other hand, his acts and energies are necessarily finite, it follows that he cannot possess himself of it in its totality. Hence it must be held that mankind will have attained the largest measure of good when, its energies and its limitations being taken into account, it has done all that it was possible for it to do.

Now, there is no proof that God does not obtain this *maximum* of fruit from mankind. For, that which would seem to show the contrary, when carefully examined, is found to have manifestly the character of one of the conditions which we have indicated as requisite for the realization of the greatest good. No doubt, it seems at first sight that man's moral *status*

would have been more fortunate than it is, if, deprived of liberty, he had been necessitated to act virtuously; but upon reflection we discover that liberty is an indispensable condition for rendering man the author of his own good. It seems also that it would have been better if man could have been virtuous without any effort; but on going deeper into the matter we find that effort and combat are likewise an indispensable condition of real merit. Moreover, it seems more desirable that man should be able to practise virtue without being obliged to make any sacrifice; but here also the truth turns out to be that upon sacrifice depends the amount of credit which man acquires with Eternal Justice, and of the recompense which he hopes to receive. Again, a life free from physical ills would seem preferable to one afflicted with them; but the truth is, that these ills are a powerful stimulus for bringing into action the best faculties of human nature; are the means through which man becomes wise, and acquires experimental knowledge of himself as well as of other things; and finally, are the necessary occasion of that sacrifice whereby the human will rises above the external and material world, and moral being triumphs over physical being. It seems that things would go better with mankind if sensible allurements did not draw men away, as they now do, from the path of righteousness; but reflection shows that this very temptation is a necessary condition of a greater victory on the part of virtue which overcomes it, and a field wherein the virtuous man displays his heroism and learns more and more to know himself and the relations he has with the things around him. It seems, above all, most desirable that moral evil should be altogether excluded from the

world; but again this kind of evil is found to be a necessary condition of man's greatest good, whether because it gives occasion to repentance and conversion of heart, which is the greatest prodigy of moral virtue and of the Divine Goodness; or because it becomes a stimulus to the most exquisite sentiments of love and gratitude towards God, sentiments full of unspeakable sweetness; or because the perversity of some individuals immensely increases the merit of others, and thus adds largely to the sum of the complex good of mankind. As regards the eternal loss of the reprobate, considering the Justice and Sanctity of God, this is the inevitable consequence of moral evil; especially if we bear in mind that the moment of man's death is an accident bound up with the whole series of events—a series, which, being regulated by the Supreme Goodness, cannot and must not have regard to this or that particular individual, but to that greatest amount of the complex good of the whole human species, in view of which good the said series is disposed.

Now, against all these arguments tending to justify Divine Providence, the following very subtle objections may still be urged:—

379. 1st. It is certain that God, without destroying man's free-will or even diminishing it in the least, can move it to moral good. It seems, therefore, conformable to the nature of God, Who is the *essence of goodness*, that He should move the free-will of all men to the greatest moral good; and they would be none the less the free authors of their own actions.

2nd. It is true that effort, sacrifice, and consequently the victory over physical evils, serve to increase the moral worth of human actions. But the greatness of

moral good does not depend on these elements alone, but also on the extent to which God, the supreme object of morality, communicates Himself to the soul. It follows that man could be abundantly compensated for the moral good which he would lose in case he were freed from the necessity of making efforts and sacrifices, by a spontaneous and extraordinarily abundant communication of Himself on the part of God. In a word, God can communicate Himself to man in any measure He pleases; He could, therefore, simply by using this His power, enrich man with the highest sanctity, without obliging him, as He now does, to submit to the painful ordeal implied in manifold struggles and sufferings. And certainly thus to lighten the burdens of human life would seem in accordance with Infinite Goodness. What is said of moral good may be said also of the eudemonological. God could amply make up for that knowledge and that joy which man derives from his combats and sacrifices, and his very repentance, by an immediate infusion of a knowledge and joy more vivid and intense, though of another species.

3rd. In the same way, God could save all men, and even make them attain the highest degree of sanctity; either by moving their free-will or by infusing sanctity into them independently of their free co-operation, or, finally, by giving sinners, at the moment of their death, a grace of such efficacy as to change them instantaneously, no matter how great their wickedness, into saints of the highest rank.

Such are the objections which are now to be answered, and which I hope to solve in the most complete manner.

CHAPTER III.

THE SOLUTION OF THE ABOVE-MENTIONED OBJECTIONS WILL BE GENERAL, THAT IS, ONE FOR ALL.

380. These objections might be answered in several ways. For example, as regards the second, we might rightly affirm that it leaves matters just as they were. For, he who makes it, allows that, in his theory, human nature would be deprived of that increase of moral good which accrues to it from personal effort and sacrifice; and this is the same as to concede that mankind could no longer attain the *maximum* of perfection of which it is capable. In fact, assuming that God wished to communicate Himself to man in as large a measure as is conceivable, He could always do this, and at the same time leave to man the glorious opportunity of entitling himself thereto by his own exertions. Consequently, the Divine communication in question does not exclude effort and sacrifice on the part of man. These simply increase man's moral good; or rather, they enrich him with a species of good so different from all others, and so peculiar, that it can in no case be compensated or commensurated by any other; especially when we consider that man, in virtue of his natural constitution, is far more pleased with a good acquired by his own efforts and sacrifices, than he would be if this same good were bestowed on him merely as a gratuitous gift (355).

381. But to meet the said objections one by one, each on a distinct ground of its own, is not the object of this book. I prefer meeting all the three by the same answer, but an answer which I flatter myself will be found thoroughly conclusive by those who understand it. It will be drawn from the laws according to which wisdom operates; and these laws are to be sought and discovered in the very essence of wisdom itself.

To this end let us begin by clearly defining what it is that these objections pretend that God should do in order truly to be said to act with supreme goodness.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ABOVE OBJECTIONS ARE DRAWN FROM UNCERTAIN AND FALLACIOUS PRINCIPLES.

382. The men who raise the objections now under consideration, would have us believe that God cannot be said to govern the world with supreme goodness, because He does not by His omnipotence move the free-will of all men to choose the most virtuous course; because He does not infuse into them such an amount of virtue and grace as would amply compensate for the moral excellence which arises from effort, combat, and sacrifice; and lastly, because He does not by His omnipotence save all men, at least, at the point of death.

But I would ask these critics: Are you, pray, quite sure of the truth of your assertion? Is it really certain that the rules of which you make use for distinguishing the relative degrees of goodness are not fallacious? Is the *maximum of goodness* so easy to determine as it seems to you? Or might not perhaps the measuring of the height of the Goodness of God be more difficult than the measuring of the distances of the fixed stars from our globe, or the length of the rays of their light? For if this were so, and if you who so readily charge the Divine government of the universe with being less perfect than it might be, were not positively certain of the soundness of the rules by which you gauge the

highest summit of goodness, should you not rather adore in silence, and leave matters to the judgment of Him Who holds the reins of that government? For, if those rules were even only uncertain, the objections based on them would likewise be uncertain, and hence would lead to no conclusion. As we observed before, Providence remains intact and fully vindicated if it only can be proved that the goodness which God deals out to men *may be* supreme, although one may not be able to measure it, nor be in possession of such standards as are required for defining the conditions which it must have in order to be supreme. (12) Surely ignorance cannot form the ground of an objection, and a wise being will not cease to be wise, because there is an ignorant person who is unable to comprehend his wisdom!

383. In truth, it is impossible to arrive at a correct estimate of the Goodness of the Creator without at the same time having an adequate idea of His Wisdom. The reason is, that no one can act with supreme goodness, unless he be supremely wise. A foolish goodness is no goodness, since foolishness is already of itself an evil. If a foolish man happens freely to do some good, he does it, not in so far as he is foolish, but because he is not wholly foolish; for if he were, he could not be the author of any good. *Vice versâ*, in order that a being may be all goodness in his operations, he must be all wisdom; in order that he may produce the highest good, he must make use of the highest knowledge. Consequently, the essence of goodness must lie in the essence of wisdom: so close is the link between the Divine attributes!

It follows, that the critics of Divine Providence with

whom we are dealing cannot prove that the rules which they pretend to impose on Supreme Goodness are unquestionably true, unless they likewise prove that the rules followed by Supreme Wisdom are the same. Now, this is precisely what they cannot do. And although, in accordance with the axiom of Logic, *asserenti incumbit probatio*, it is on them that devolves the duty of making good their assertions, and until they do this, such assertions are sufficiently met by a mere negation; nevertheless, I will not shrink from the task of demonstrating that the proof in question is an impossibility. I will, moreover, strive to show that the laws which they would prescribe to the Goodness of God, are not the laws followed by wisdom, but rather the reverse. For this purpose, it will be necessary to start with our investigations from the very notion of wisdom, and to seek in that concept the principles according to which wisdom operates by its very nature, and therefore necessarily. This is the task to which I now gird myself.

CHAPTER V.

THREE LAWS OF THE ACTIVITY OF BEING.

384. Ontology (1) shows us that being has a threefold act, that is to say, exists in three modes.

Being in the first mode is called *real;* in the second, *ideal;* in the third, *moral.*

385. Ideal being exists only in the real, and real being which contains the ideal is called *intellectual being.*

Moral being exists only in the intellectual.

Hence the human mind conceives three kinds of real being: the *simply real,* the *intellectual real,* and the *intellectual moral.*

386. Each of these three real beings has an intrinsic order, and consequently *an order in its operation.* Hence three laws governing in their operation the three kinds of real beings.

387. The law governing the operation of *real being, considered simply as such,* is that of *causality,* which is expressed thus: "If anything begins to exist, there must have been an entity which has made it begin" (a cause).

388. The law governing the operation of *real being, in so far as it is intellectual,* is that of *sufficient reason,* which is expressed thus: "The intellectual being

(1) The Science of Ontology, to which the author here alludes, must not be confounded with what has now come to be called *Ontologism.—Tr.*

does not act without an end proportionate to its action" (a reason).

389. The law governing the operation of *real being, in so far as it is moral*, is that of *moral liberty*, which may be expressed thus: "Moral being tends to unite itself to all the entity known, without being impeded therein by any partial entity." (1)

(1) The *moral liberty* of which we speak here must be carefully distinguished from *meritorious liberty*, that namely, which is the source of merit. The latter, called also *bilateral liberty* (or simply, *free-will*) is only a branch of moral liberty. Some among the moderns confine the name of liberty to the meritorious kind alone; but one does not see why the meaning of the word *liberty* should, in opposition to the common custom of the ancients, be thus restricted; and to pretend that it should, seems merely quarrelling about words. *Quæstio est de voce*, remarks very justly that eminent Divine, Dominic Viva (Proposit. III., Jansen., xviii.,) *num voluntas solum libera a coactione dicenda sit absolute libera. Multi affirmant, et in hac acceptione D. Thomas dicit* (Quæst. X. *De Potent. Dei*, art. II., ad 5m.): "*Deus sua voluntate libere amat se ipsum, licet de necessario velit bonitatem suam, et tamen in volendo est libera*": *et in eodem sensu docent passim Spiritum Sanctum libere procedere a Patre et Filio, ac beatos Deum amare.* Now, it is certain that the act with which God loves Himself, and with which the Blessed in heaven love God, is holy, and therefore most moral, although not free. Hence we here call *moral* that liberty which is necessary to constitute an act as *morally good*; and this liberty is not always *meritorious*. The meritorious liberty must be free, not only from all coercion (*coactione*), but also from all necessity. For *merit* is not the whole of moral good, but only one form of it. There is a moral good which implies no merit; and such is the love with which God loves Himself, or that with which the Blessed love God, although there is in it a goodness of transcending excellence.

What I here call *moral liberty* must not, however, be confounded with *spontaneity*. The latter has a far wider meaning than the former; because it expresses, not a power, but a *mode of action* belonging to various powers. A real being also, by its instinct, acts spontaneously, and yet has nothing moral in it. Again, an intellectual being acts spontaneously, without its action being therefore moral.

Moral liberty, 1st, is an internal principle of the agent, not an external cause moving him to act. In this sense St. John Damascene has defined that

390. These three laws governing the operations of the threefold form of being are necessary and immutable. But an explanation must be given of the sense in which I call them *necessary*.

391. When I say that *real being* necessarily acts in conformity with the law of causality, I take the word *act* as meaning, not the primal act *(actus primus)* in virtue of which that being itself exists, but its secondary acts *(actus secundi)* by which it causes new entities to exist. Here the necessity is absolute; for a real being could not produce any new entity were it not itself in existence. A product supposes a producer.

392. When I say that *intellectual being* necessarily acts only when there is sufficient reason, I mean that unless it did so, its action would not be intellectual; because an action, to be intellectual, must have a reason which precedes it as its guiding light. Nevertheless, because an intellectual being, besides being intellectual, is also real, as was stated, it sometimes acts blindly, without a reason, or without a sufficient reason; but in that case it is not, properly speaking, the intelligence that acts, but the reality alone. Hence

which is done with liberty thus: *Sponte id fieri dicitur, cujus principium et causam continet is qui agit* (de Fide Orthodoxa, Lib. II., c. xxiv.). This does not suffice to constitute meritorious liberty; because there can be no doubt that the cause of the love which God has for Himself, is not outside Him, but is His very essence; nevertheless that love, although essentially characterized by moral liberty and essentially holy, is not meritorious.

2ndly. Moral liberty is not found in all the internal principles of the agent, but only in that which constitutes him moral, and which consists in the tendency to good generally, to every good, to every entity (since *ens et bonum convertuntur*), and hence to the whole of being. This tendency is that primal act which constitutes the power of acting morally, and which I have elsewhere called also by the name of *moral instinct*. But all this will be seen more clearly from what will be said in the sequel.

it seems that intellectual being is not necessitated to act according to a sufficient reason; and this is true if we speak of an intellectual being composed of reality and intelligence; but it is not true if by a mental abstraction we separate from that being its reality, and consider it purely in so far as it is intellectual; for, as such, it cannot act except on condition of following a sufficient reason; without this, there is no act of intelligence at all.

393. When I say that *moral being* is necessitated to act with moral liberty, my meaning is that it is not determined to its action by any external cause, inasmuch as it is itself an internal principle tending to unite itself to all the entity known, in which union it finds its good, pure delight, joy.

Here, however, we must make a similar observation to that made regarding the necessity peculiar to intellectual being. What we call moral beings are not purely moral, but are at the same time both real and intellectual. Hence they do not always act as moral beings, but they act sometimes as intellectual, and sometimes simply as real. It seems, therefore, that they do not always act according to the law of moral liberty. Indeed, this is so whenever they do not act as moral, but only as real or as intellectual beings. In these cases they follow the laws governing respectively the action of real or of intellectual being. But if by a mental abstraction their moral entity is separated from the other two, the necessity of the laws which we have assigned to them is at once seen. For, to say that the moral entity does not in its action tend with a spontaneous movement to unite itself to the whole of being, would be a contradiction in terms; since that

entity would then be wanting precisely in that which gives it the name and quality of moral.

394. In conclusion, individuals which are simply real, invariably maintain their own laws of operation, because they stand alone and do not contain any other form of being. But intellectual individuals, and moral individuals, sometimes deviate from their own laws; not indeed because these laws have not, in respect to them, an equally absolute necessity, but because in them, being exists under different forms, each of which may follow its own particular laws. For *real being* is what individuates *ideal being* which it contains, and is also what individuates *moral being*, which arises from the active relation between real and ideal being; so that there is no individual, either intellectual or moral, which is not first of all real. (1) Thus, the intellectual individual has two modes of action; one according to the law of real being, and another according to that of ideal being, because it is the result of the two; and the moral individual has three modes of action; one according to the law of real being, a second according to that of ideal being, and a third according to that of moral being, because it is formed of the three, which are, so to speak, its component elements.

(1) How *real being* is *the principle of individuation*, is explained in the *Anthropology* ("Antropologia"), Bk. IV., ch. i., art. v.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAW OF VIRTUE, AND THE LAW OF WISDOM.

Recta ratio ipsa est virtus.

St. August. *De Utilit. Credendi*, XII. 27.

395. What, then, is the law of virtue?

It is that of moral being, of which we have just given the formula.

396. But why does not the *moral individual* always follow the law of virtue, without ever turning to vice?

Because, as I said, that individual is not moral only, but also intellectual and real. It has therefore a threefold activity, that is to say, the activity peculiar to real being, the activity peculiar to intellectual being, and the activity peculiar to moral being. Hence, when it acts as a real being, or as an intellectual being, its action may be opposed to the law of moral being.

397. But how is it possible that being under one form should find itself in opposition with the same being under another form? Are we, then, to suppose that being is at war with itself, and that there is of necessity strife raging perpetually within it? (1)

(1) As it is difficult to explain the possibility of *error* in an intellectual being, so it is difficult to explain the possibility of *sin* in a moral being. I have elsewhere shown that in the human understanding two faculties must be distinguished: the faculty of *simple knowledge*, and the faculty of *affirmation* and persuasion; and I have also shown that error belongs, not to the first, but to the second, which is in great part subject to the human will.—See *The Origin of Ideas*, Sect. v., p. iv.—*Treatise on Conscience* ("Trattato

No, certainly, this is not possible; on the contrary, being under its three forms is in marvellous accord with itself, and the threefold law of its action produces that primordial harmony whence all other harmonies originate.

Why, then, I ask again, does the moral individual, by acting according to the law of reality, or according to the law of intelligence, happen sometimes to be in contradiction with the law of morality?

The reason of this is because the moral individual

della Coscienza Morale"), nn. 26–29.—*Philosophical System*, n. 71.—The faculty of *simple knowledge* is produced in man by ideal being; but the faculty of *affirmation* and persuasion is produced by the *real being that has come into relation with the faculty of knowledge* which it possesses. The book of Giuseppe Ferrari, entitled *De l'erreur* (Paris, 1840), deserves to be read, because it clearly sets forth the difficulty which philosophers have encountered in trying to explain how errors can take place in an intelligent being. In justice to myself, however, I feel bound to observe, that he is mistaken in thinking that I contradict myself when I affirm, first, that men, in consequence of *being obliged to act*, must, even when not speculatively certain of the thing, make *practical judgments* which, without their own fault, are sometimes erroneous; and then condemn Idolatry, Materialism, etc. It seems to him that, to be consistent, I ought, for the same reason (of the necessity of acting) to have excused these errors also. But if he will only be good enough to reconsider the matter a little, I feel certain that his own perspicuity will soon make him acknowledge: 1st, That Idolatry, Materialism, etc., are not *practical judgments*, but speculative errors, not at all necessary for action; 2ndly, that *the necessity of action* of which I speak does not refer to the *mode* of action, but simply to action itself. For example, if I wish to preserve life, I must eat; but this necessity does not oblige me to make use of one kind of food rather than another. In the same way, granted that Religion is necessary to man, it does not follow that he is necessitated to take a false and absurd Religion, such as Idolatry is. Idolatry would never have appeared in the world, if voluntary vice had not darkened men's understanding, or, as I am wont to express it, had not caused their faculty of *persuasion* to assent to error.

A similar difficulty is found in explaining the possibility of *sin*; and it is this difficulty that I have here been endeavouring to meet.

does not possess real being, nor, consequently, intellectual being, in all their fullness; in a word, because it is *limited;* and *limitation,* as we have seen, lies at the bottom of all evil (293-295). When real being is considered in all its completeness, its operations are found to be entirely in accordance with the law which governs the operation of intelligent as well as of moral being. So also, if we imagine an intelligent being complete in all respects, it will never in its operation go counter to the law of moral being; on the contrary, all its acts will naturally be in entire agreement therewith. But if there is question of a limited real being, and, consequently, also of a limited intelligent being, then it may very well happen to place itself in contradiction with the law of moral being; not because its operations proceed from a real or from an intelligent being, but because they proceed from a real or an intelligent being which is limited. This limitation it is that causes it to act not fully in unison with the law of reality, or of intelligence, hence in opposition to the moral law which always aims at the *totality of being.*

398. Now let us apply all this to man, who is an individual at once real, intellectual, and moral. If his three activities—the real, the intellectual, and the moral—were to act separately, and wholly independently of one another, it could not be said that they were mutually at war. For example, the animal acts which take place independently of the will—such as the circulation of the blood, digestion, etc.—belong to real being, which acts *independently of,* but not in *opposition* to, the law of intelligence and that of morality. (1)

(1) In the supposition that man were naturally perfect, would actions of this kind depend on his free-will? My own belief is that his free-will would

These three activities, however, do not always act in an isolated way, but very often with a mutual relation, both active and passive. In such cases, there is either agreement or disagreement between them; and what produces the one or the other is the *will*, which collects and unifies all three in itself. These principles of action I have also called elsewhere respectively *animal instinct, rational instinct, moral instinct.* (1) To say the *will*, is the same as to say the *human individual;* because the will is precisely that activity which constitutes the human individual. It is, then, the activity of the individual—the will—which by its unity places the three operative principles or instincts in close relation to one another, and hence in agreement or disagreement. The individual, as we have said, is always formed by *reality*, the root of the other two modes of being. Consequently, the will also belongs to real being, which contains the ideal and the moral, which are individuated in it. Again, the will is a power which springs up in real being, through the intelligence which is in it; for the will is an activity whose action follows knowledge. Now, knowledge can extend to everything. Accordingly, the animal instinct, the rational instinct, and the moral instinct, may equally be objects of knowledge. Hence the will may deter-

have it in its power to *suspend* and to *excite* all the animal activities; but if the will were to abstain from interfering by its action, whether prohibitory or excitatory, then the animal functions would continue, because their proximate cause would lie in the animality itself. Even in our present state the will can have more or less influence on these functions; but they do not *necessarily* depend upon the will; hence they can be accomplished in us without its intervention (See the *Treatise on Conscience*, "Trattato della Coscienza Morale," n. 69).

(1) See the *Treatise on Conscience*, n. 66.

mine itself to act according to the good that is presented to it by the animal instinct, or by the rational, or by the moral. In this way the human individual, through the will, makes his choice as to which of the three instincts he will follow in his action, and this choice is what places these instincts in the relation of agreement or of disagreement with one another. (1) It is not one instinct that acts independently by itself; it is the individual that chooses between the several instincts.

399. Having thus explained how, through the unity of the individual or of his distinctive power, the will, the three instincts are brought into relation, and, so to speak, into competition, we must now go on to investigate how it is possible for them to be mutually opposed, and how the preference given to one may be an injury and an outrage to the others.

To repeat what has been said. Being, entire and complete in each of the three modes, could admit of no war within itself, and so the three instincts would be in perfect accord. But since the real being which constitutes the human individual, so far from comprising the *whole of reality*, is only a very small part of it, the result is that the instinct which springs up in it is not that of real being in its totality. It follows that the instinct of human reality does not tend to give actuality and perfection to the whole of real being, but

(1) Hence St. John Damascene says that the act of choosing springs from the mind: *Harum (rerum) vero electio penes mentem nostram est; nam ipsa (mens) actionis fons est et origo* (De Orthodoxa Fide, Lib. II., c. xxvi.). These words are an authoritative justification of the distinction I have drawn between *practical* or *operative knowledge*, and merely *speculative knowledge*. For if, according to this Father and St. Thomas who follows him, the mind is the principle and source of action, we must needs say that the first *stamina*, so to speak, of human activity lie in knowledge itself.

tends only to give actuality and perfection to that very small particle of reality which is in man. As a consequence, the said instinct is found at variance with the exigency of moral being, which always tends to the whole, always calls for the completion of being, always demands that every part of being shall form, in due proportion, the object of man's recognition and love.

400. But the origin of the opposition spoken of will be more clearly seen by a description of the way in which the law of moral being is constituted. Man, who, when considered merely in what he has of reality, appears so limited, when considered as an intelligent being, stretches forth as it were, on the one hand, into infinity, whilst, on the other he again presents himself as confined within very narrow bounds. The form (1) of his intellect is ideal being, which is infinite in extent. This form, however, does not itself place him in communication with real being, does not cause him to perceive any reality (153). Reality, as we have seen, is given to him in feeling, and in a most limited measure. If, then, we consider man in so far as he is endowed with the intuition of ideal being, his intellect has in it something of the infinite; for ideal being shows him the essence of

(1) *Objective* form, not *subjective*. Rosmini's *ideal being* (or the *light of reason*) stands to the intellect that sees it, as the material light stands to the eye on which it shines. In this Rosmini is fundamentally opposed to Kant, who made all his *forms* come from the mind itself; so that in reality those forms were nothing but the mind which saw itself in the different attitudes presented by them. Kant's fatal system, which radically destroys the objectivity, and by consequence the intrinsic necessity and the unchangeableness and eternity of truth, is in substance the same as the system of those who would have it that the intellect and the light in virtue of which it is an intellect, are one and the same thing.—*Tr.*

being, (1) and gives him the formal knowledge of the whole of being. But inasmuch as the reality and substance of being is communicated to him in an extremely limited quantity, the quantity only which he feels—he can perceive that and no more. It is true that from those realities which he perceives he can by reasoning infer the existence of other realities; and it is also true that the existence of other realities may through language be made known to men by other beings who are in communication with him. But in the first place, the realities which he comes to know of in these two ways, are not all the realities which subsist; and in the second place, unless they happen to resemble the realities which he has himself perceived, his knowledge of them is a blank knowledge. It does not show him the *mode* in which they exist; it only informs him of their *existence*, and of the *relations* they happen to have with the beings perceived by him. This blank knowledge we have elsewhere designated by the name of *ideal-negative*. (2) Thus the knowledge acquired by man is of three kinds: 1st, *Ideal* knowledge, or knowledge of *intuition*, whereby man knows the *essences* of beings; this is always universal, though more or less determinate; 2nd, *Perceptive* knowledge, or knowledge of *perception*, whereby man knows the *actual existence* of beings; this is always particular, and very restricted; 3rd, *Ideal-negative* knowledge, or knowledge gained either by reasoning or from the *testimony of others*, whereby man knows the existence of certain real beings,

(1) To say that ideal being shows man the *essence of being*, is the same as to say that it shows him *what* being, or to be, is, irrespectively of *modes* or of kind (*See Philosophical System*, n. 18).—*Tr.*

(2) For the very important distinction between *positive* knowledge and *negative* knowledge, see *The Origin of Ideas*, nn. 1234–1241; n. 1416.—*Tr.*

but does not know the *mode* of their being; and he knows furthermore certain relations which they have with the beings perceived or intued by him, and which determine them to his mind. All this, however, does not place him in communication with reality itself. These three kinds of knowledge might be reduced to two, namely, 1st, The knowledge of the *essence* of beings, and 2nd, The knowledge of their *actual existence*, the latter being subdivided into *positive* knowledge, and into *ideal-negative* knowledge.

Such being the case, I ask: How is the law of the action of moral being constituted?

401. It follows, as we saw, from the action of intellectual being, namely, the law of *sufficient reason*. Let us see how.

First of all, we must be careful not to confound the *law of sufficient reason considered as a principle* of action and belonging to the practical reason, (1) with the principle of *causality*. If a man acts, his action has always an efficient cause; for there is no effect without a cause. Such is the law of every action in so far as it

(1) Here it is necessary to bear in mind the sense in which I use the word *practical reason*, entirely different from that attached to this word by Kant, and which I have defined in the Treatise entitled *Principles of Moral Science*, ("Principii della Scienza Morale,") ch. v., art. v.—Now, as the ways of *knowing* are two, the one *speculative* and the other *practical*, so the principles of reason have two values, the one *speculative* and the other *practical*. I will explain. The principle of sufficient reason in the speculative order is the *cause* conceived by the mind as the reason which accounts for the existence of a given effect. But the same principle of sufficient reason in the *practical order* is quite another thing; it is that which renders the agent reasonable. When a man has a good reason for a certain action, and determines to do it in view of that reason, *reason* has then become the original cause of his action; the *principle of sufficient reason* has been rendered efficacious, operative, practical. Such is the law governing the actions of intelligent beings.

is real. This efficient cause, however, is not always, in itself, a sufficient reason for man. Indeed, sometimes man acts in defiance of reason. In that case, he does not render the principle of sufficient reason practical; it is not by this principle that his action is determined; consequently he does not act according to the law of intellectual being.

402. Now, what does this law imply? It implies the necessity of acting for a *reason*. A reason is something seen by the mind; to say *reason*, therefore, comes to the same as to say *cognition*—no matter in what way that cognition may be acquired. Whether it be of the class above alluded to as the ideal, or of the perceptive, or of the ideal-negative, it is always a cognition, and hence a reason for action. All things that are known to us, therefore, constitute, relatively to our intellectual activity, so many reasons capable of leading to action; nor does the mode under which they are known, cause them to become either stronger or weaker reasons than they are in themselves. For example, man is known to us in the perceptive mode, and God in the ideal-negative mode. The perceptive mode has a much greater power to set the human activity in motion than the ideal-negative. Nevertheless, man's worth is not increased, nor the dignity of God lessened on that account; and these objects constitute a reason for action, not in proportion to the degree of power which the mode of knowing has to move and determine us to action, but in proportion to their own intrinsic value.

402. But how is it that *perceptive* knowledge has more power to move us than *ideal* or *ideal-negative* knowledge only?

The reason is, that in perception, real being is

communicated to us. Consequently the efficacy of perception to set our activity in motion proceeds from the activity of real being, which has the nature of *efficient cause;* whereas the ideal cognition, or the ideal negative, presents to us nothing but a *sufficient reason*, without that efficacy.

403. Since, therefore, *reality* is only the matter of cognition, and not its *form*, it is plain that the action befitting intelligent being is that which springs from the *form* of cognition; and this is equally found in all the modes of knowing. It follows that the law of sufficient reason in the practical order consists in acting *in accordance with the objects as formally known*, and not in *accordance with the objects as materially perceived.*

404. Hence, if a being were purely intelligent, that is to say, if beings were known to him by no other than formal knowledge, he would invariably act according to the law of intelligence, namely, according to the entity or worth of those beings, and therefore according to a sufficient reason.

So also, if a being were to know all beings in the same mode, no matter which of the three we have enumerated, the mode of knowing would not then have any influence in determining him to act in opposition to the entity or worth of those beings. Consequently, his action would always be directed by a sufficient reason, because it would always be proportionate to the entities known, and not to the different modes in which they are known.

405. With these doctrines we are in a position to explain how it is that the law of moral being proceeds from the action of intellectual being, and that man

sometimes deviates from the one as well as from the other.

Moral being has necessarily a tendency to unite itself to the whole of being, feeling pleasure and rejoicing in it; which tendency might also be called a natural and universal love. Now, that which, properly speaking, constitutes the moral essence, does not consist in the *affectiveness* of such tendency, but in its *universality;* it consists in accounting every being good in so far as it is being, and hence a good all the greater, the more there is in it of entity. I must beg the reader to remember that in saying this I simply speak of an ontological fact which should be attentively and impartially considered. That "every being is good," is a proposition having its foundation in this fact, that "complete being loves itself," in other words, that "there exists a Being Whom we call complete and moral because He loves entity itself." The existence of this love is the ontological fact which we affirm: its characteristic is that this love has *entity itself* for its own peculiar object, and therefore is proportionate to the degrees of entity, neither more nor less. When, however, we say *love*, we mean something rational, we mean, that is to say, that the object loved is given to the principle of love through knowledge. Now, speaking of man, we have already seen that his only formal knowledge is that which extends alike to all entity indeterminately, and, with their several determinations, to all the beings known by him. In other words, we have seen that of the beings which man knows he always knows the formal part, but not always the material part. Accordingly, in order that his activity may be moral, *i.e.*, extend *virtually* to

all entity, and *actually* to all beings known, he must follow *formal knowledge*, that is to say, he must love entity in so far as he knows it, quite irrespectively of the *mode* in which he knows it. Man, then, acts according to the law of moral being only when he distributes his affection or love in proportion to the degrees of entity contained in the beings known by him, whatever be the mode in which he knows them.

406. But we have said the very same of the action of intelligent being as such; for we have said that intelligence obeys the law of sufficient reason, and that the sufficient reason consists in the beings known, apart altogether from the mode in which they are known. The question now arises: "Is the law of *intellectual* action identical with the law of *moral action?*"

Such is precisely the case; for an intelligence would never act unless moved thereto by some affection; and this affection, to be really intelligent, must spring from knowledge, must be an appreciation of the being known. Now, being, in order to be appreciated, must be a good to the knower; since the words *good* and *affection* express two correlative concepts, so that good and affection co-exist, and the one calls for the other in virtue of that *law of synthesism* to which we have elsewhere referred.(1) Good and affection are the two distinct terms of the ontological fact mentioned above. If follows, that an intelligent being, either would have no activity whatever, or else must have in him a principle of universal love, which is exactly what is entitled to the name of *moral*. Hence it is that we always distinguish two

(1) See *Principles of Moral Science* ("Principii della Scienza Morale"), ch. ii., art. i.

kinds of knowledge, the one speculative and the other operative. The *speculative knowledge* has no action outside itself; it rests in the ideas contemplated by it. The *operative knowledge* is an appreciation and affection whereby the knower tends to enjoy the being known; and this practical act of the intellectual being is the very thing which constitutes moral being.

407. Why, then, have we spoken of two distinct laws: that of *sufficient reason*, and that of *moral liberty?*

The law of sufficient reason governs both speculative and operative knowledge; but with this difference: In the order of speculation, the inquirer seeks for a sufficient reason of the things he knows, and he finds that reason in principles and in causes. When he has found these, his mind is satisfied and at rest. Here there is as yet no morality. In the order of action, on the contrary, what moves the agent to act is, not the desire to explain things to himself, but the affection which inclines him to unite to himself the whole of being by enjoying it as his good. This affection or love it is, which, by adhering to the different beings in proportion to the respective degrees of entity (which entity constitutes their aptitude to be loved), renders the sufficient reason operative, practical. For, a known entity becomes a sufficient reason for the action only because it is naturally loved, or, which is the same thing, because it is naturally a good. The sufficient reason, therefore, in so far as it accounts to an intelligent being for what he knows, is one thing; and the sufficient reason of his action is another. In the first of these capacities, the sufficient reason is merely a light to the mind; in the second, it is a principle of action;

and it is only when considered in reference to this latter capacity, that the law of sufficient reason identifies itself with the law of morality. No sooner is the intelligence accompanied by affection, no sooner does an object present itself as lovable, than the intelligent being becomes active by an action determined by the degrees of the entity known, and these degrees become the sufficient reason for his acting morally: morality then exists in intelligence. Thus, *sufficient reason* is changed into *moral liberty* the instant that it becomes operative.

408. Hence the law of *moral* being receives a twofold descrimination. When considered in so far as it is an active principle independent of the modes of knowing and of the instincts of reality, it is called *moral liberty;* and when considered in the universality of the moral affection which distributes itself according to the worth of the beings known, it is called *practical sufficient reason.*

409. Here again we can see how it is that man, although by nature a moral being, may deviate from the law of morality and contradict it by his actions. This is owing to the same reason for which we said that an intellectual being may deviate from the law of intelligence; since it is one sole deviation with two different relations, the one a relation to mere knowledge, and the other a relation to *complacency* in the entity known; so that *sin* is, in fact, *practical error.* As therefore an intelligent being, if he were intelligent only, would never deviate from the law of intelligence (404; so a moral being, if he were moral only, would never act otherwise than morally. Man, however, besides being intelligent and moral, is also real, and

reality furnishes him with the matter of his cognitions; hence it comes to pass that his cognitions are, in part, materiated or perceptive, and, in part, free from matter and purely formal. Now, pure formal cognition is what constitutes the sufficient reason of intellectual and moral action, because it is by it alone that beings are known as they are in themselves. But materiated or perceptive cognitions disturb in man the order of beings as known formally in themselves, by impelling him to act, not according to that order, but according to the stimulus of the reality. Hence a struggle in man, invited on the one hand by the noble instinct of his moral nature to act conformably to the worth of beings as known by formal knowledge, and on the other violently drawn to act contrariwise, by the instinct of that limited portion of reality which is perceived by him, and which cares for nothing but its own satisfaction.

410. Between these two contending instincts there sits as arbiter the will, which, as we have said, is the radical activity of the individual human subject as such. (1) This activity differs from the three instincts above enumerated as the individual subject differs from the three entities; that is to say, it differs *mentally* from the real entity, from the intellectual entity, and from the moral entity. It does not, however, properly speaking,

(1) This may serve to explain the following passage of St. Hilary: *Tria tantum in homine reperimus, id est corpus et animam et voluntatem. Nam ut corpori anima data est; ita et potestas utrique utendi se ut vellet, indulta est* (In Matth. x. 20). In distinguishing the *will* from the body and from the soul, he points out the will as a power capable of making use, at pleasure, either of the animal instinct, which comes from the corporeal reality, or of the intellectual and moral instinct with which the soul is endowed.

constitute a fourth entity. It is simply the union of the three, which springing from the unity of *real being*, as from their root, are first threefold, and then unified in *moral being* as in their perfection. Thus the will is the activity of being existing in moral intelligence. It belongs, therefore, to the individual, to his will, to decide in the struggle of which we speak, either in favour of the intellectual and moral law which summons him to act in accordance with beings as known formally, or in favour of the law of real being, which impels him to act in accordance with beings *materially known*, that is, in accordance with mere feeling and instinct. When the will decides in favour of the moral instinct, it becomes one with it, simply adding to its force; when it decides in favour of the real instinct, it likewise identifies itself with it; and it is thus that sin arises. The will is a force of the individual, which each of the two contrary instincts seeks to attract and keep to itself. Nevertheless, it often happens that neither of them succeeds, and then the will remains in the state of bilateral liberty, or liberty of indifference. But if either of these instincts attracts the will to such a degree as entirely to control its activity, then the individual wills and does good or evil necessarily (although spontaneously) and hence without either merit or demerit. Such is the state of the blessed in heaven and of the reprobate in hell.

We are now enabled to define precisely what *the law of virtue* is and what the *law of wisdom*.

411. The *law of virtue* is: "Always act in conformity with the law of moral being."

412. The *law of wisdom* is: "Always act in conformity with the law of intellectual being."

413. The law of virtue, therefore, is that of *moral liberty*, in virtue of which man does not allow himself to be controlled either by the instinct of limited real being, or by the instinct of intellectual being limited by materiated knowledge, in opposition to formal knowledge.

The law of wisdom is that of *sufficient reason*, in virtue of which man does not allow himself to be moved by any *efficient cause*, without an adequate reason.

414. Accordingly, the *law of moral being* becomes the *law of virtue*, when it is viewed in reference to the possibility of man's deviating from virtue by allowing his actions to be determined by the impression he receives from the force peculiar to reality, either alone, or joined with materiated knowledge, and it can be so viewed because man is an agent at once real, intellectual, and moral.

The *law of intellectual being* becomes the *law of wisdom*, when it is viewed in reference to the possibility of man's deviating from wisdom, by likewise allowing his actions to be determined by materiated knowledge, in so far as this is influenced by the force peculiar to reality, in opposition to the true worth of beings as shown him in the pure light of formal knowledge.

415. Here, then, we see how the law of virtue and the law of wisdom are closely conjoined, and result, in fact, in one and the same law; and we also see why *wisdom* was taken by all antiquity to signify a *virtuous knowing*, the foundation of virtue, virtue itself in its full completion.

416. Let us now return to the object to which all that we have said in this long chapter was directed. We wished to vindicate the Providence and the Good-

ness of God against the three objections last set forth (379). With this intent, we have shown :—

1st. That the law of virtue is the same as the law of wisdom ;

2ndly. That the law of wisdom is the same as the law of *sufficient reason ;*

3rdly. That therefore the law of *sufficient reason* and the law of virtue are but one and the same law.

From this it plainly followed, that if a being were to act without sufficient reason, he would be neither wise nor virtuous. Hence we concluded, that the said objections would at once appear to be futile if it could only be shown that he who makes them does not judge of the Divine Goodness according to a true and certain rule, which can be no other than the law of wisdom. For, in that case there would be no valid ground for affirming that there is a sufficient reason why God should either move the free-will of all men so as to make them all attain to supreme good ; or communicate Himself to them in so exuberant a measure as to dispense them from all effort and all sacrifice without at the same time subjecting them to any loss of virtue ; or, at least, by His omnipotent action convert all obstinate sinners at the moment of death, and thus save them from hell. For, unless it be shown that God, by omitting to do these things, goes against the law of sufficient reason, it will never be proved that He fails either in wisdom or in virtue, or in goodness ; and so the objections remain without any weight. Now, that this sufficient reason cannot be found and consequently that the objections in question are entirely devoid of force, will be seen by what is to follow.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE LAW OF *SUFFICIENT REASON* MAY BE IDENTIFIED WITH THE LAW OF THE *LEAST MEANS*.

Sapiens operator perficit opus suum breviori via qua potest.
St. Thomas, *Summa*, p. iii., q. iv., art. v.

417. The law of *sufficient reason*, then, considered as the law of *practical reason* (407), is the law according to which wisdom operates. We must now reduce this sovereign law to another formula of equal value, by showing that it is the same as the law of the least means—in other words, that the law of the *least means* is identical with that law of *sufficient reason*, which wisdom necessarily follows in determining the quantity of action and of the means to be employed in its operations. That the identity of the two formulæ may be clearly seen, I invite attention to the following reflections.

418. When a wise person thinks about doing a certain thing, he puts three questions to himself:—

1st. Shall I *do* this thing, or shall I not?

2nd. What do I *aim* at in doing it?

3rd. *How* shall I proceed in order that I may realize my aim?

The answer to these questions can be affirmative only when he sees a sufficient reason for each affirmation.

419. The sufficient reason which governs the

actions of a wise being is, therefore, threefold—that is to say, he must in every action he does follow three sufficient reasons.

A sufficient reason must determine him to decide on acting rather than on not acting.

A second sufficient reason must determine him in acting to aim at one result rather than at another.

A third sufficient reason must determine him to proceed to the attainment of this result in one way rather than in another, by certain means rather than by others.

420. These reasons, taken abstractly, are three, but in the order of facts, they constitute only one complex reason; for if any one of them were wanting, a wise being would not have that truly sufficient reason which causes him to act.

421. In the preceding chapter we have said that beings, as known formally, are, speaking in general, the sufficient reason according to which wisdom acts. And in truth, any one who carefully considers the matter, will find that it is only by the entities known that a wise being can be furnished with all and each of the reasons which are necessary for his action. Let us see this :—

I. What can be the *sufficient reason* which leads a wise being to decide on acting rather than on not acting?

Obviously, it must consist in an *end* which he proposes to himself. Now, a wise agent cannot find any end worthy of him except in a being at once intellectual and moral, whether this be himself or someone else. In other words, every wise action must have for its end

the esteem, the love, the respect, the perfection, or the production of an intellectual-moral being. Let us see this part by part by classifying all the actions which it is possible for an intelligent being to perform.

422. These actions fall under three heads :—

1st. To know beings, to appreciate them, to love them, and according to this appreciation and this love to determine the rest of one's actions;

2nd. To increase the perfection of known existent beings;

3rd. To cause new beings to come into existence.

423. Now I ask: If the beings here spoken of were not of an intellectual-moral nature, could they afford a wise agent a sufficient reason for acting?

Assuredly not; for as I have explained elsewhere, merely real beings cannot, by the very nature of things, be anything else than *means*.(1) A being that has not both the intellectual and moral faculty, has no PERSONAL SELF *(suità)*; (2) and it is only we who by language (3) and imagination endow it with such. It exists, but of an existence which is relative, and in the nature of a means to an end lying outside it, and belonging to beings of the intellectual-moral order. Having therefore no SELF, it is incapable of any good, it cannot refer to itself either good or evil, or in fact anything. As a consequence, no sufficient reason will ever be found for loving, or benefiting, or producing a being which has not intelligence and free-will, or at all events is not ordained to one

(1) See *Principles of Moral Science* ("Principii della Scienza Morale"), Ch. IV., art. viii.

(2) See *Psychology*, nn. 875–877. (3) *Ibid.* no. 876.

which has; because, to say it once more, in this kind of being the object necessary to benevolence, the PERSONAL SELF, is wanting. We may indeed appreciate it in relation to another thing which exists to itself and enjoys good for itself, we may imagine it to have an enjoyment of its own; but in these cases, the object, the end of the action, is still a being possessed of SELF, and therefore intellectual-moral.

424. If, then, the three kinds of actions we have mentioned had some merely real good for their object and rested in that, they would not be at all wise. Indeed, it involves a contradiction to suppose that an intelligent being would ever think of acting on such a condition. Even if he were apparently to love, or to benefit, or to propose to himself as the end of his action the production of a being devoid of intelligence, on diligent examination we should find that in so doing, he either had himself for his end, or in imagination gave, as we have said, an intelligence, a self, to beings which are not possessed of it. Hence his action would always, in point of fact, have for its term a being endowed with intelligence, or erroneously supposed to be so endowed. In this latter case the action would be *foolish*, because untruthful, although at the same time it would belong to the order of *intelligence*.

None of the three kinds of action which we have indicated could, therefore, be seriously thought of by an intellectual being, unless he had for his object an intellectual-moral being. Consequently, the latter alone can constitute a sufficient reason to determine a wise agent to act rather than to abstain from action.

425. Before proceeding further, it may be here observed that the same condition, namely, that the

object be intellectual-moral, is required also in order that the actions in question may be moral; thus again showing that wisdom and morality are in perfect accord, and, as it were, identified.

In fact, we have already seen that no action could appertain to the moral order, unless its end regarded an intellectual being.

What esteem, what love can an intelligent being have for a being which is devoid of intelligence? He will have no esteem or love for it; or he will esteem and love it for its own sake; or he will esteem and love it for the sake of a being that is intelligent, that is, he will love it as a means to his own advantage and pleasure, or to the advantage and pleasure of others.

In this last case his esteem and his love are raised to the moral order, because they terminate in intellectual being.

In the second case, his esteem and his love belong to the moral order in an inverted sense: I mean, they are immoral, because they do an injustice to intellectual being by falsely attributing its excellence to a thing that has it not. Here it is again in reference to intellectual being that the act is in opposition to the order of morality.

In the first case, there is no act, and therefore no morality of any kind.

426. A similar reasoning may be made as regards the perfecting of a being. If the being whose perfection is increased is intellectual or moral, then the act also is moral. But if it is neither intellectual nor moral, then nothing moral is done, unless that perfection be intended for the advantage of another being who is intellectual-moral.

427. So likewise as regards that action by which a new being is produced. If that being is neither intellectual nor moral, nor produced for the advantage of a being who is intellectual and moral, such production has no morality in it. It will simply be the product of a real being which acts blindly, not the action of a moral being. (1)

In conclusion, no action can be moral, save by having for its object, or its ultimate end, an intellectual-moral being; for, as we have said, moral being, by its very essence, tends to the *totality* or *completion of being*, and not to one form of it only; it does not stop at reality, but with reality conjoins intelligence and love. By this union, being is complete, and the action becomes moral.

428. II. What can be the *sufficient reason* determining a wise being to produce one effect rather than another?

Again it must be intellectual being, the object of the action. This may furnish a sufficient reason either morally necessary and absolute, or not necessary and only relative.

429. For, if we speak of the first kind of actions, namely, of the esteem, and the love and the actions consequent upon them, the intellectual being who is the object of these actions affords a sufficient reason

(1) Simple production considered in the abstract is, in a moral sense, neither good nor evil. Hence, so long as one speaks of production, without specifying its mode or its object, there is no moral law to command or to forbid it. But the good or the evil belongs to the *mode* of the production, and lies in the goodness or badness of the object intended. It follows, that if the producer, instead of aiming by his action at nothing beyond reality, aims at what will render it intellectual-moral, and endows it with the suitable qualities and perfections, then what he produces is truly a moral good, and his action is a wise action, because it is done for a proper end, a sufficient reason.

which is in part necessary and absolute, in other words, morally binding. This sufficient reason consists in the degree of entity which formal knowledge shows to exist in that being, and which is precisely what determines the measure or quantity of esteem and love due to it, and the actions consequent upon that esteem and love. Accordingly, if an intellectual-moral being is appreciated more than his degree of entity deserves, the act is no longer truly wise nor moral, because that excess, being arbitrary and blind, contradicts the law of sufficient reason. If he is appreciated less than his degree of entity demands, the act is again defective, because the law of sufficient reason is not adequately recognized by it.

430. I say, *and the actions consequent upon that esteem and love*, for it should be distinctly observed that this first kind of morality—the obligatory—extends to these also. Some of them come under the name of *cultus*, and some under that of *beneficence*: of *cultus*, if they express interior affections; of *beneficence*, if they are done for the good of others.

Thus those outward actions by which man's affections naturally exhibit themselves, ought not, without some just cause, to be repressed; and this proves the obligation of an external worship of the Divinity. So likewise, the father is bound to maintain and educate his son, as a consequence of the appreciation which he ought to have of himself as well as of his son, and of the paternal love which is a natural part of himself. (1)

(1) It should be observed, that although the appreciation due to a moral being ought to render all who are able, willing to succour him in case of need, nevertheless not every kind of suffering or of misery, is a sufficient reason for determining such esteem and affection as will show themselves by

431. The second and third kinds of moral actions of which we are speaking, have no sufficient reason inducing moral obligation; hence they include only deeds of purely gratuitous goodness. What, then, will be the *sufficient reason* for these actions?

Not, certainly, the right of the being whose perfection it is intended to increase, or which it is intended to bring into existence. For, no one has a right to gratuitous goodness; and much less can rights be claimed by a being that does not yet exist.

Neither can it be moral obligation, which we have excluded. What then is the sufficient reason?

The mere *goodness of the benefactor*, who acts according to his nature, expressed in the aphorism, *Bonum est diffusivum sui* ("Goodness is diffusive of itself").

432. Nevertheless, the effects of this goodness have certain limits; and it is these limits that determine the benefactor to produce one effect rather than another. Now, these limits arise from the limited measure:

1st. Of the power and knowledge of the benefactor himself;

2ndly. Of his goodness;

3rdly. Of the capacity of the being whom it is intended to perfect or to produce.

It is, then, in the *instinct of the goodness* of the bene-

action. For, if the need in question were caused by guilty conduct, and the sinner still persisted in his evil course, then that degree of esteem and affection which prompts kindly action, would cease to be binding, and would be rightly superseded by the love of justice which demands that the sinner suffer condign punishment. Only an infinite, omnipotent, and wholly gratuitous goodness, such as that of the Supreme Being, can cancel sin itself, giving also due satisfaction to justice, as it did in the Redemption of mankind. This however would be a work appertaining, not to the first, but to the second class of the moral actions above enumerated.

factor—bounded by his own limitation, by that of the means at his disposal, and finally by that of the nature of the being who is the object of his beneficence—that the sufficient reason must be found which determines the *quantity of beneficent effect* of which we speak.

433. III. But by thus determining the quantity of beneficent effect to be aimed at, we do not as yet determine the *kind of action*, the expedients, the means to be employed for its actual production. For, the same effect may be obtained in different ways, and by different means and actions. What is, then, the sufficient reason that determines the right mode of action to be chosen in order to obtain a given effect?

This reason lies in the quantity of the effect which it is proposed to obtain.

If, therefore, different modes of action equally fitted to obtain that effect in full perfection, were to present themselves to the mind, it is clear that a wise person would give preference to that which is the simplest, the easiest, the least expensive. Indeed, if the effect at which he aims is what determines him to act, and if that effect is all he wants, why should he employ a greater means than is needed for effecting his purpose? He will therefore choose, for producing the effect in question, the least adequate cause, the least quantity of action, the least means.

Such is what we call the *Law of the Least Means*. It is the same law as that of *sufficient reason*, applied to determine wisely the *mode of action* to be followed for obtaining a given effect.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHAT SENSE IT MAY BE SAID THAT THE LAW OF THE LEAST MEANS OBTAINS IN THE WORLD OF REAL BEINGS.

434. The importance of this law, upon which our future reasonings will have to be based, does not permit me to proceed further without first briefly showing that its dominion extends also to the whole order of real things.

We have just seen the expression that law may take: "A wise being, when intending to produce a given effect, will choose for that production the least cause possible." In this formula we already hear the words *effect* and *cause*, which remind us of the law governing the operations of real being, the law of causality.

435. In fact, since an intelligent being is real being wedded to the ideal, we must needs admit, that although he directs his action in accordance with the law of sufficient reason, nevertheless the action itself to which he is led by a sufficient reason, cannot be accomplished save in accordance with the law of causality, because such action is real. The intelligent being knows this law and understands its necessity; consequently, the same reason which determines him to a given action, determines him also

to follow the law in virtue of which the effect is obtained, namely, as we have just said, the law of causality. Now, this law is also formulated thus: "Like effect, like cause;" which is the same as to say, that the quantity of the effect determines that of the cause, neither more nor less. And in truth, if, on comparing a given effect with a given cause, the latter is found to exceed in quantity the former, it is plain that all such excess is a dead loss in reference to the effect; indeed, in so far as the cause exceeds, it is no cause at all. Thus it comes to pass that in the order of real being, every effect is always the *greatest possible* in respect to its cause; or *vice versâ*, that every effect is always produced by the *least* among all the causes which could possibly produce it, for if that cause were not the least, it would be greater than is wanted, and in so far as it is so it would not be a cause.

436. To speak accurately, however, the concepts of *greatest* and of *least*, as applied respectively to effects and to causes, are not derived from the mere consideration of *real nature* itself. In this nature there are only causes and effects; the *relations* of greatest and of least are added to them by our mind, which considers the *effect* as an *end* to be gained either by ourselves or by others. I will explain.

437. Real nature produces nothing but real effects; and these are always simply commensurate with their causes, so that *in them* there is neither a *more* nor a *less*. But our mind conceives a possibility of their being greater or less, although there is no such possibility in point of fact. Hence in relation to this supposed possibility the mind finds that each effect is always the greatest, and each cause always the least

possible. (1) For example, the light, in passing from a rarer to a denser medium, is refracted by approaching the perpendicular. Now, if we imagine that the light, as though it were endowed with understanding, proposed to reach the point at which it now arrives, by the shortest path and with the smallest velocity—in other words, wished to save as much of velocity and distance as possible, it certainly could not take any other course than it does take. (2) As a matter of fact,

(1) In fact, any one who carefully considers how mathematicians proceed in solving problems of *maxima* and *minima*, will perceive that they always suppose a series of possible terms, among which they try to discover the greatest or the least of all. Now, that series of terms is not a thing existing in nature; those terms are merely abstract possibilities conceived by the mind. By applying this theory to what is seen to happen in nature, it is found that each natural effect responds to that term, greatest or least, which is sought, and to no other; and it is precisely on this account that that is the only term in actual existence, to the exclusion of the others, which are assumed, as I have said, hypothetically, in order thus to succeed in getting at what is wanted.

(2) Pietro Martino was the first to demonstrate that the *minimum* in the course followed by the light when passing through mediums of various densities, is the result of the velocity combined with the space traversed; so that if the velocities maintained by the light in two mediums are marked by the letters a, b, and the spaces traversed by the letters x, y, the *minimum* value of the formula will be $ax+by$. If to the space and the velocity we add the mass of the bodies, and generalizing the principle, we say that "In all the motions occurring in the universe, MSV—*i.e.*, the mass multiplied by the space traversed and by the velocity—is always the *minimum*," we shall have what Maupertuis has called "The law of the least action." To show how far this law, as conceived by Maupertuis, is exact, and how far inexact, a great deal would have to be said which I could not well express within the limits of a short note; nor indeed is it necessary for my purpose. It will be enough for me to observe that the law of the least action as conceived by the French *savant* should be combined with and corrected by that of the "Conservation of active forces," for which we are indebted to Huygens; because in the formula of Maupertuis, the living forces are not taken into account. And this would not yet be enough. I shall, however, further on

however, there are not several ways for it to choose from: it has only one way, that determined by the forces which propel it. But we, with our intellective imagination, conceive several others as so many postulates. That which is impossible in reality, we assume as a possibility, and, by comparing the real with the supposed ways, we find that the light follows exactly the course which requires the least quantity of action.

So likewise we observe that nature often shapes its productions in an hexagonal form; for instance, as Mairan tells us, in the seeds of certain plants, in the scales of certain animals, and sometimes in the flakes of snow, etc. Now, this form is the natural result of soft round flexible bodies being placed in close juxtaposition. Thus packed together, they can give no other figure. But our mind, by examining the properties of that figure, discovers that it is, of all figures, the most sparing of space, and hence that it must have been the one chosen if such beings were to be created according to the Law of the Least Means. Our mind arrives at this conclusion, because it confronts that figure with the others which it has imagined as possible; although when nature itself produces it, no other figure is possible.

It remains therefore to ask how and why it is that the human mind feels prompted to set down as a law of nature what is only a mode of conceiving belonging to itself. The general reason is, because man, in con-

touch upon the *measure* of the least action considered in reference, not merely to bodies, but to all beings generally, so that the law in question will be converted into an *ontological* one; and what is there said about the fixing of that measure will suffice for my intent.

ceiving any *reality*, always adds to it something of his own, which he must afterwards take away by means of reflection, if his concept is to be genuine. He regards the action of real nature as similar to his own action, which is intellectual and voluntary. Now, a being who, like man, acts by intelligence and will, is not tied to one mode of action alone: he proposes an end to himself, he aims at producing a given effect decided on by himself, and this effect, in so far as conceived, lies outside *simple reality*. Reality does not choose the ends of its action; indeed, to speak accurately, it has no *ends*, but only *effects*, which are determined solely by the blind forces or activities which immediately produce them. Being incapable of choosing the effects of its actions, it is, of course, incapable of choosing the ways and means of obtaining them. It always has one only way of acting, one only mode of producing those effects; no other ways or modes are possible to it. Hence the effects which it produces cannot properly be called *greatest*, neither can their causes be called *least;* since there is no possibility of other effects or of other causes to serve as terms of comparison. Man, on the contrary, can propose to himself whatever ends he pleases, and can choose between divers ways of obtaining those ends. As an intellectual being, which of these ways will he choose? The simplest of all, the easiest, in short, that which leads him to obtain the effect he desires by the least means; for, what is beyond that, is superfluous, is a waste of action, has no sufficient reason.

438. Now, an intelligent being acts in this way even when the effect which he aims at cannot be obtained save by the action of the forces belonging to real

beings, let us say to corporeal beings. If the physical effect he desires to obtain were equal to the whole sum of the effects produced by such quantity of these beings as he can dispose of, he would have nothing to do but wait for the complex effect of the actions natural to them; and that would be the effect he seeks.

But man does not, ordinarily speaking, wish for the whole sum of the effects produced or producible by the action of corporeal beings, because he has certain special requirements of his own, different from those of brute bodies. Among the many effects, therefore, which their natural action does or could produce, he singles out one for himself,—I mean either an individual or a complex one—which is to serve as a means to his intellectual or moral ends. Accordingly, he must seek for this particular effect in nature; but there he finds it mixed up with other effects which are of no importance to him, which he does not want. He must, therefore, separate it from all the rest, that he may have it by itself alone. In this way that effect will become a *minimum* in respect of the complex of all the others with which it lay confused in nature. As a consequence, the immediate cause which he chooses for producing it must also be a *minimum* in this sense, that he, as intelligent, will not make use of any of those forces or causes which produce other effects that he wishes to exclude.

439. For example, let an intellective being set himself to move a spherical body from a higher to a lower plane; and let us suppose that what he wants to obtain from the forces of nature is this descent and nothing else. What will intelligence or wisdom suggest to him? The different ways, rectilinear, curvilinear, and mixed,

by which that body can descend, are innumerable. Nature has all these ways and the material body itself has no preference for one rather than for another. But which will be the one chosen by the intellective being who cares for the descent alone? Certainly that in which there is nothing superfluous. It is plain, therefore, that among all the possible ways of descent he will select that which offers to the descending body the least resistance, because every resistance is an impediment to its descent; he will, that is to say, select the way by which the body can descend in the least time, and hence with the greatest celerity. Essential Wisdom finds this way at once; but man, whose wisdom, confronted with Essential Wisdom, is as a drop in the ocean, must search for it by long and laborious study, comparing together all the possible ways of descent until he finds the one best suited to his purpose. He will therefore compare the straight, the curved, and the mixed lines, and, upon careful examination of the *pros* and *cons*, become persuaded that what he seeks must be found, not in the first, nor in the second way, but in the third, the curved. But as in curves also there are endless varieties, he will repeat the same operation in regard to these, and go on until at last he discovers that the simplest, easiest, quickest way of descent lies in that kind of curve which has received the name of cycloid—the curve described by any point in the circumference of the circle, e.g., a wheel when rolled along a straight line and keeping always in the same plane. Wisdom, therefore, will prescribe to him, for the attainment of his object, the adoption of the cycloidal way, because that accords with the Law of the Least Means.

440. Now, when man has found this out, he is apt to draw the conclusion that whenever a brute body moves in a cycloidal curve—as for instance in the case just mentioned of the points of the circumference of a wheel—it is material nature itself that follows the Law of the Least Action; and so he attributes wisdom to it. But this is an error. The curve is traced by the wheel's circumference merely because the motor-force applied to a body of circular form like the wheel makes it do so. It has no choice, for that is the only way possible. Hence, in respect to the wheel, it cannot with any truth be called either an easier or a more difficult way. It is, however, easier in respect to that one end which man proposes to himself when he wishes to make a body descend from a higher to a lower plane by a path different from the vertical.

Man, then, attributes to material bodies the same laws according to which he is himself accustomed to act; and thus it seems to him that those bodies also follow in their action the Law of the Least Means. This fact is very deserving of attention, and I will give one or two more examples of it, the better to prepare the way for the argument which I wish to base upon it.

441. Suppose that an intelligent being wants to find in nature an isochronous motion, namely, that kind of motion which, constantly repeated, is ever uniform in time. Nature can certainly act so as to produce this effect, but it does not mark out such effect in particular from among all the others which it can produce. It acts with perfect indifference in whatever way may be required by the positions and circumstances in which it finds itself at every moment. The intelligent being, therefore, to obtain at any time

he wishes the particular effect of continuous and isochronous motions, is obliged to place certain bodies in such positions as may fit them, by obeying their own law (that of causality), to secure the attainment of his object. Hence he will apply the cycloid to the pendulum, and by this means obtain a constant proportion between the motion of rotation and that of translation—the two motions of which the cycloidal motion is the result; and this invariable constancy of proportion will give him precisely what he wants. It is, therefore, again the intelligence which chooses, among all curves, the cycloidal; thus avoiding, in the production of the effect sought, all irregularity as well as all superfluity.

442. The very same mode of reasoning is applicable to the inventions of machinery. All these inventions are systems of bodies devised by man's intelligence, in order to obtain certain special effects; and their perfection consists in nothing else than simplicity, which is always reducible to a saving of action. The less the action whereby they obtain the effect intended, the more is their mechanism in accordance with the principle of intelligence. Hence, if a machine were formed by an infinite intelligence of perfect wisdom, the action used in obtaining its effect would be the very least possible.

443. In material nature, on the contrary, there is nothing like this; for it cannot will any one special effect, and in all those movements which its forces actually produce, it is subject to physical necessity. When, however, I say that material nature does not follow the Law of the Least Means, I mean to speak of those effects which it produces by its own forces alone; not of that which might come to it from an intelligence

presiding over it. This point requires some explanation.

We must observe, then, that material beings may be considered either in their own individuality, or in their relations with space, or with other units of matter. These material units (extra-subjective) are the atoms, namely, the primary elements of matter, which I assume to be indivisible. Now, the forces with which these atoms are conceived as endowed, do not in any way determine the place they ought to occupy in space. Indeed, the atom always preserves its identity, and hence the identity of its forces, whatever be the part of space in which it happens at any time to be located. It follows that these forces of which the atom is the result (and which give it no motion, since the material atom never passes by itself from rest to motion, or *vice versâ*), do not impel it to seek one place rather than another. Consequently, it is not in them that we must look for the cause of the atom being found located in this or in that spot in space. Now, this non-existence, in the atoms, of a cause determining their position, this negation, has often been converted by human imagination into something positive, into a reality; and this reality, a creation or rather a fiction of man himself, has been called *hazard* or *chance*. In this way, hazard or chance was affirmed to be the *cause* of the collocation of the atoms in space.

How did the human mind fall into so enormous an error as to transform even nothingness into a cause? This was in large measure due to the intellective instinct.

444. It is a property of this instinct to incline the mind to judge of the being of things according to the

principles peculiar to the mind itself. Each of these principles begets a corresponding instinct in the faculty of judgment, and one of them is precisely the principle of causality. Accordingly, the mind is so inclined to see effects conjoined with their causes, that whenever it does not at once find the causes, it readily creates or invents them with a precipitate judgment. As, therefore, the atoms have not in themselves the cause of their being in one place rather than in another, fallacious human judgment takes hold of that absence of cause and calls it by the words *hazard*, *chance*, and so it gives reality to what is no reality at all. For, as I have explained elsewhere, words draw to themselves the attention of the mind, which takes them as signs of things, always supposing that there is, underlying the word, a thing, even when there is none. In this way, nothingness itself is conceived by man as something positive, in virtue of the word *nothing*. (1) The word stands in lieu of the thing which is wanting; it is a representative that represents nothing; but man, to whom this want of the thing represented is irksome, does not examine that word's message; he blindly accepts it as a true representative; although, in truth, it is like an impostor who boasts of a message which no one has given him.

445. To resume, then: the cause of the collocation of the atoms in space is not in themselves, in their nature, in their forces; whatever, therefore, this cause may be, it must be sought outside the atoms themselves. This cause must have determined the places for them all at the beginning of things. From these primitive positions, through mutual action and reac-

(1) See *Psychology*, no. 1045.

tions, and the changes that have since then successively occurred according to constant laws, there has arisen the present collocation of the atoms, the present state of the material universe. Obviously, this cause which lies outside matter must have been intelligent.

If it was intelligent, it must, in collocating the atoms in a certain way, have proposed to itself certain ends; since, as we have seen, it is by the *ends* that the sufficient reason—the guiding principle of intelligence—is constituted.

Moreover, these ends, as we have also seen, could only have consisted in the good of intellectual moral beings (423).

If this intelligent cause is supposed to have been infinite, it must, in the collocation of the atoms, have maintained in the utmost perfection the Law of the Least Action, or of the Least Means. It must, therefore, have collocated these atoms in such a way as to obtain the greatest effect with an action relatively least.

Hence the Law of the Least Means, of which the material atom can show no vestige, must be expected to shine conspicuously in the complex of the atoms, namely, in the world, if it is true that the world is the work of wisdom, and if we consider the relations of position between the atoms in order to those effects which are beneficial to intellective moral beings. For, as these relations cannot have for their cause the material atoms themselves, they must be attributed to the action of an intelligence.

If, therefore, by the observation of nature we actually find: 1st, that material things spontaneously produce a quantity of the effects beneficial to intellec-

tive beings, and 2ndly, that these effects follow the Law of the Least Action; we shall have a manifest proof that an intelligent cause has been at work, and that wisdom presides over the material world.

And as this is precisely what is seen in numberless effects produced by atoms and by material causes associated in given ways in nature; so it comes to pass that men are wont to regard the Law of the Least Action, or of the Least Means, as belonging to the material beings themselves; whereas in very truth it is only a law of that intelligent being, who, keeping himself hidden from our sight, presents to our senses his work, nature.

446. From all these things we may conclude, that the Law of the Least Means may be recognized by man in material nature in two ways:

1st. In purely material effects considered irrespectively of the advantages which intellective-moral beings may derive from them, as for instance, in the *minimum* of action employed by the light in passing through media of various densities, or in the wonderful rapidity with which the electric fluid reaches a given point through conductors made of the same substance, though of varying lengths, etc.

In these effects it is the human intelligence that ascribes the Law of the Least Action to material nature; because it compares the way in which they are produced, not with other ways physically possible (for there are none such, since nature has only one way, one mode of acting), but with ways which man's mind supposes to be possible, while it imagines material nature as an agent free to choose between them. Thus, the Law of the Least Means does not belong to the physical things engaged in such

productions, but is imposed upon them by man, who erroneously credits them with the law of his own intelligence.

2nd. In material effects viewed in order to the good of intellective-moral beings. This class of effects depends on the harmonious union of many material beings; a union which is not determined by any virtue or force inherent in those beings themselves, but by an intelligent cause which must have so disposed and ordered them. Here we see again, that the Law of the Least Means belongs, not to mere physical beings, but to an intelligence; although this applies it to them in the manner already stated.

447. So far, however, we have considered real being, as it presents itself to us in the universe, under one aspect only, namely, that which exhibits it to us as *material* or corporeal, in other words, as either sensiferous or felt. (1) The other aspect under which it should be considered is that which exhibits it to us as *sensitive*. In fact, the merely sensitive soul, such as that of beasts, is a real being, but not an intelligence. Now, does this kind of vital principle maintain in its action the Law of the Least Means?

To answer this question, it is necessary first of all to reflect that in animals there is not sensitivity alone, but sensitivity organized and individuated. Now, to know whether sensitivity follows the Law of the Least Action, it is again necessary to consider it first by itself alone, apart from that which it owes to organization; thus doing with sensitivity the same as we have done with matter. For, we have considered matter, first, in what it has in itself, in its apparent forces; and after-

(1) See *Anthropology* ("Antropologia"), Bk. II., Sect. II., Ch. ix.

wards, in what it receives from its collocation in space, whence arise those peculiar relations between its several parts, whereof this sensible universe is the result.

448. What, then, does sensitivity considered by itself, in its mere concept, present to us?

Nothing else than a uniform feeling diffused in space, which becomes its term. This feeling is not greater at one point of space than it is at another. It has no fixed principle from which to depend; but the self-same principle of feeling is found alike and with the same activity at every point of the space felt. Such is the genuine concept of sensitivity divested of whatever may come to it from without.

Now, sensitivity, or better, feeling, taken in this way does not act according to the Law of the Least Action, or of the Least Means, but only according to that of causality.

And in truth, what kind of activity does the concept of mere corporeal feeling present to our mind?

449. The activity of feeling must be sought in the sentient act. It is a property of the sentient act to produce the *maximum* of *feeling* possible. Indeed, this is what real being does in its every act, what every cause does when at work. We have already seen that in the order of material real being the effect is equal to the quantity of the producing cause; and that human intelligence considers this effect as a *maximum* in comparison with other effects theoretically, though not physically, possible. In the same way, the feeling produced by the sentient act is greatest in this sense, that man may imagine other feelings less in degree, not adequate to the act, and in comparison with which

the actual feeling presents itself as greatest. When, however, the sentient act, in virtue of the determinations and conditions it receives from without, has come into existence, then the feeling which follows does not admit of either a "more" or a "less;" it is simply what it ought to be; and hence, speaking accurately, it cannot be designated as "greatest," but only as "proportionate to the act which produces it."

The *maximum*, then, which is found in feeling, does not belong to real being, but to the manner in which man's intelligence conceives it.

450. But now, what are the circumstances and conditions which determine the sentient act? They may vary *ad infinitum*. What, then, is the sufficient reason for which a given feeling in actual existence has such or such conditions rather than such or such others, is determined in this way rather than in that? Can we find this sufficient reason in sensitivity itself?

Certainly not. As we have seen that the position of the atoms in space is not determined by the forces of the atoms themselves, but comes from a cause external to them, so likewise the conditions which determine the sentient act to be more or less intense, to be of a certain quality rather than of another, etc., are not found in the act of sensitivity itself. Sensitivity is indifferent alike to any of the acts which may belong to it. It simply posits that act to which it is determined by the conditions that happen to be imposed on it. We must, therefore, look for the cause of its determinations in something outside itself.

451. Now, what is this external something which determines the corporeal sensitivity to one kind of act rather than another?

It is the collocation of the corporeal molecules, which are the term of feeling, or to adopt a term more in use, the organization. In fact, the corporeal sensitivity is an energy consisting in an *adherence of feeling* to a body. It depends, therefore, on the body in such a way that, were this to be withdrawn from it, it would itself cease to exist. (1) Hence the collocation of the said corporeal molecules, which are destined to be the term of feeling, and the passions to which the body resulting from them is subject, are the conditions determining the sentient act, and, by consequence, the feeling produced by it. If, then, the body is larger, the feeling is more extended. If the body felt changes place, the feeling goes along with it. If in the body felt there occur internal movements without doing away with the feeling of it, the feeling is impressed by those movements, receives excitations, sensions from them. If the felt body loses its continuity, the feeling is multiplied with the multiplication of the *continua*. If several felt bodies become conjoined in one, their several feelings also combine so as to become one only. In all this the corporeal sensitivity operates

(1) See the *Anthropology* ("Antropologia"), Bk. II., Sect. I., Ch. XII.–XV.; Sect. II., Ch. I.–XI.—From what I advance here, the reader will perceive that I consider the *sensitivity* determined in animals by organization as the principle of all their instinctive operations. This thought which I have expounded more fully in the *Psychology* is not new; but it has not perhaps received as yet all that large development of which it is susceptible. Bonnet plainly admits the same principle where, treating of the marvellous performances of bees, he writes: "N'avançons pas que les Abeilles, ainsi que tous les Animaux, sont de pures machines, des horloges, des métiers, etc. Une Ame tient probablement à la machine: elle en sent les mouvements; elle se plaît à ces mouvements; elle reçoit par la machine des impressions agréables ou déplaisantes, et c'est cette SENSIBILITÉ qui est le grand et L'UNIQUE MOBILE de l'Animal." *Contemplation de la Nature*, P. xi., ch. xxvii.

with its own energy, which, as we have said, consists in an *adherence of feeling* to bodies. In short, whenever to sensitivity there is allotted a body in certain given positions and conditions, sensitivity displays a corresponding energy, producing the greatest possible feeling, greatest, I mean, in the sense above explained. And since every energy, every act is a force which posits itself, it follows that the felt body, by being subject to sensitivity, receives from it an influence which holds it together, or preserves its internal movements, or increases them, or diminishes them, according to the peculiar nature of the sensitive force or energy.

452. From this we may draw an obvious consequence. The corporeal feeling has not its determination in itself, but in the collocation of the atoms and molecules which constitute its term, and the cause of this collocation lies wholly outside the body and its forces. If, therefore, we find by observation that the atoms and molecules are distributed so as to produce an organization and a unity of feeling calculated to give results which tend to the good of intelligent beings; and if, moreover, we find that the complex and permanent feeling arising from such distributions proceeds, in giving those results, in accordance with the Law of the Least Action; we are plainly bound to admit that the external cause which has determined this harmony of corporeal parts in view of so excellent an end, and with so much wisdom, must be intelligent. Accordingly, the fact of the animal operations obeying the Law of the Least Action, or of the Least Means, proves that this law belongs, not to the animals themsleves, but to an intelligence which dominates animality and keeps it subject to its control.

453. Hence the theory here proposed, far from denying that in the composition of the animal and in its operations there is an end and a mode proceeding from intelligence, firmly establishes it.

For, if we observe the composition of the most perfect of all animals, namely, of man, we find that it is ordered for the immediate service of intelligence; nay, that it is ordered for the very production of an intellective being, man himself. This composition, therefore, not being due either to corporeal forces or to sensitivity, must be attributed to an intelligent author.

454. As to other animals, the services which man derives from them are innumerable; and in proportion as the sciences progress, new uses and new advantages are discovered, which man, even without his knowledge, draws from the animal kingdom. These also, then, are ordered for the good of intellective beings.

455. Cannot some vestiges of the Law of the Least Means be found also in the organisms of brute animals?

Undoubtedly they can. Even that little attention which has, up to the present, been bestowed upon the composition of bodies, is enough to show this in many of the effects produced by animal bodies. But it is probable that with the increase of carefully conducted and persevering observation and studies on the animal operations, the vestiges they bear of the great law of intelligence will become ever more apparent. Were I to enter fully into this subject, I should be endless: it will be enough to have touched upon it.

456. First of all, let us bear well in mind that the animal is the result of organization, or, which comes

to the same thing, of a certain distribution of atoms, the union of which constitutes the living machine. There is nothing to show that with the breaking up of the organization the sensitivity of the atoms ceases; whilst there are many reasons for believing that feeling always adheres to them, multiplied either into as many sensitive beings as are the divided portions, if these still retain an organism, or, if all suitable organism has been lost, into as many as are the atoms themselves. Hence the gradation of animals from the most complicated to the most simple, a gradation which ends with living molecules or atoms. In the event, however, of separate atoms alone remaining, there could certainly be no motion exhibited by them, because atoms are invisible and unalterable; consequently, all fusion of several feelings into one would cease, and with it all sensitive excitation as well as that harmony (1) between motion and feeling which gives unity to multiplicity, and preserves and reproduces this unity in which the *animal* properly exists.

457. From this concept of the animal we can see that the Law of the Least Action regulates the composition of the animal no less than its operations. For, all that goes to constitute the animal, and all that is done by it in order to its life, preservation, and reproduction, arises from one sole and most simple cause, the *sensitive*

(1) Readers who take an interest in the important question of harmony here referred to by the Author, are recommended to read carefully the whole of the 11th Ch. of Sect. II. of the second book of the *Anthropology*. There the Author professedly undertakes to explain, by the laws of mere animality, all those wonderful operations which are, by a most common error, taken as indicating the existence in animals of intelligence properly so called. He refers to the same subject in the *Psychology*, especially in Bk. iv., Ch. xxviii., and in Bk. v., Ch. i., ii. and iii., etc.—*Tr.*

energy, to which an infinite wisdom has given diverse occasions for operating in those marvellous ways which are observed in the individual animal, simply by uniting together at the beginning some corporeal atoms in such a manner as to make them result in prolific germs. Given these first aggregates of atoms, or these germs—varied perhaps in all possible ways, and placed in relation with other external atoms, also suitably disposed—the *sensitive energy* itself does all the rest, and constitutes the animal, and nourishes it, and develops it, and reproduces it. This energy it is that constitutes all the numberless forms of animals, which, as I have just said, I believe to be as many as are the aggregates capable of constituting a living machine. Hence the graduated scale, I do not say of beings, but of animals. Indeed, that which Leibnitz called *The Law of Continuity* in nature, if it be confined within the sphere of animal beings, and rightly understood, is in agreement with observation, which is daily becoming richer in facts and more complete. (1)

(1) It does great credit to the penetration of Leibnitz, that from the Law of Continuity he deduced the concept of polyps and predicted their discovery. He writes: "For myself, such is the force of the principle of continuity, that not only should I not be surprised to hear that beings had been found which, with respect to certain properties, for example those of nutrition and generation, could be taken equally for vegetables and for animals . . . . . but I am convinced that there really are such beings, and that natural history will perhaps discover them some day."—In my opinion, however, Leibnitz proposed the Law of Continuity in too general a form. He proposed it as a gradation of beings generally, whereas it ought to be confined within each *species* of beings (because there is a law which I call "*Law of the Constipation of Species*," and of which I shall speak elsewhere). And in truth, between one species and another there is not mere gradation, but a leap. Thus between brute matter and animal feeling, animal feeling and intelligence, there is a difference which cannot be traversed. But what is still more, between contingent nature and the Necessary Being there is the infinite.

Could there be a simpler design than this, by which the animal is obtained with all its innumerable varieties marked in a continuous gradation by means of a most simple energy, such as the *sensitive energy* is, and of a

Probably Leibnitz was led to give an undue extension to the Law of Continuity by the imperfect manner in which *species* had been classified by Philosophers. Animals, for example, are divided by Naturalists into many species; but, properly speaking, they form one species only. So the vegetables, so the minerals. Those that are called *species* of animals, of vegetables, of minerals, are merely gradations within the same species, which might more appropriately be called by the name of *classes* or *families*. A further question now arises: Can we say that within the same species the Law of Continuity is perfect?—This point cannot be decided by experience. Reasoning, on the other hand, shows that, if by *Continuity* is meant that between one class or family and another within the same species there is a difference infinitely small, we are driven to a *reductio ad absurdum*. In nature, there is no such thing as an infinitely small difference, for the simple reason that in nature the infinitely small does not exist. But if by the *Law of Continuity* is meant that the differences are as small as it is possible for them to be, then there is no absurdity involved; and it is in this sense that I admit the law. In fact, that there should be all the classes of animals which can exist, is quite conceivable. But since certain conditions are requisite to the constitution of every animal—namely, the fusion of many feelings into one, the absence of internal pain, harmonious individuality, a circular action preserving and reproducing the vital functions—it is plain, that not every aggregate of atoms is fit to constitute an animal, a suitable organization. Only certain determinate aggregates wisely combined can do this. Consequently, there may indeed be, between these aggregates, a gradation, but not in the sense that there may not remain, between one and another, the possibility of other aggregates unfit to constitute the animal, or the animal germ suitably organized. In this sense, there is nothing to forbid the belief that all the species of created beings generally form a continuous chain, that is, in the sense that between one species and another no species is possible. I shall, however, speak of this more fully in the Cosmology, should it please God to grant me life and leisure to publish it. In all cases, between the contingent and the necessary, the distance will always remain infinite. Still this will not break the chain, if we consider it as formed of links that are really possible; because it is not within the range of possibilities, that the contingent should even so much as approach the necessary.

varied disposition of atoms which affords to this energy the occasion of operating in manifold ways? Nevertheless, this very thing must not be supposed to be arbitrary, but to issue forth from the order intrinsic to being.

458. When the animal is constituted, it is found endowed with organs the action of which is so harmonious, that the preservation, the development, and the propagation whereby it is perpetuated, are not effects produced by a single organ, but by the actions of all the several organs conspiring together to the same end. Observe, for example, how nutrition takes place; you will find that the digestive and assimilative apparatus maintains a constant harmony with that which is destined for the taking of food and preparing it for the stomach. Thus, animals that live on vegetable food are furnished with longer intestines than carnivorous animals. Why? Because the vegetable food, being less nutritious, requires to remain longer in the body, in order that the nutritive substance may be extracted from it. Hence these animals have the mouth, the teeth, the esophagus, etc., of such form and nature as serve admirably for taking, crushing, and preparing vegetable food; whilst at the same time they are unprovided with any apparatus for procuring animal food. Precisely the contrary may be observed in the carnivorous. The mere form of the beak of birds, adapted to the nutriment suitable to each kind, may well excite our admiration. Birds of prey, which feed on live flesh, have a strong hooked beak, for catching and tearing up the prey. Granivorous birds have a short and thick beak, necessary for breaking and, as it were, grinding the grain. Those

that live on spiders, flies, gnats, and the like, have a delicate and sharply pointed beak, just the thing for catching the smallest and frailest insect without its being reduced to fragments at the first bite. The snipe, which feeds on worms hiding at the bottom of marshy ground, could not support life, but for its long, straight, slender bill which enables it to search down deep and find what it wants, but which would be a great embarrassment to other kinds of birds. In short, the organs of all animals are the most fitting and the most convenient instruments that could be imagined for the special needs of each kind. And this fitness and convenience means a saving of action; since less action is required to obtain an effect by a suitable instrument, than by one which is unsuitable and ill-fashioned.

459. It will be said that the organization develops of its own accord in virtue of the primitive instinct which operates as a formative or plastic force. Just so; but in the first place, the simplicity of this means employed by nature in framing and fashioning animals with all their parts corresponding and subservient to one another, clearly betokens the Law of the Least Action applied to these complex beings by a wisdom that has no parallel. In the second place, why is it that this instinctive virtue, though but one in its concept, varies its operations so as to develop so many species of animals, and not one only? Is there a single animal, however diminutive in size, however simple in structure, that has not the internal order and the correspondence between its parts which I have mentioned?

460. I have said that the corporeal sensitivity is but one in its concept; and the instinct is merely the energy which sensitivity exerts on the body, both felt

and sensiferous. But the action of sensitivity and of instinct does not vary its direction and its mode save by reason of the different composition of felt and sensiferous atoms. To explain the animal, therefore, it is necessary to suppose, as already given, a primitive organization which has not its cause in sensitivity. In other words, it is necessary to suppose a germ organized in a certain way, and in which sensitivity, through its instinct, operates. It is, moreover, necessary to suppose the variety of these germs, of which the numberless varieties of animals produced by the plastic force of the instinct are the result. Hence the necessity of having recourse to an intelligence acting from without. Only in this way can we give a rational account of how the atoms, instead of being loosely dispersed through the infinity of space, were found distributed in various groups, forming so many animal germs; how these germs, each differing from the others, yet each perfect in its kind, came to be composed and fashioned with such wisdom as to afford to the action of the sensitive instinct the occasion of developing a perfect animal body with well ordered parts, a body in which life, excitation, individuality of feeling would be preserved and reproduced in a perpetual circle; and lastly, how all the parts, while developing in the manner best suited to their relation with one another, concurred in producing a complex of harmonious effects—I mean that one sole feeling into which the innumerable feelings which constitute the animal are absorbed.

461. If we furthermore consider that every animal, to preserve itself, must be in relation with the external and sensiferous world, and must act on it, and produce

in it diverse effects, which are necessary for its preservation and reproduction, we shall everywhere fall in with vestiges of the Law of the Least Action; and these vestiges will be seen in greater variety and more manifestly in proportion as progress is made in this kind of studies.

462. Even now we may say with all truth that all the movements made by animals are regulated by the Law of the Least Action. Indeed, animals do not by any means make all the movements they could make; they invariably select those which, all things considered, give them greater pleasure with less labour. Thus, for example, an animal that could walk on two legs will walk on all fours so long as it finds this the more comfortable posture. Every animal lies down, disposes its limbs, carries its body in the most agreeable way, although it would at the same time have the power of placing itself in a different posture. What determines it is always the principle of doing the least possible for the one sole end of getting the greatest pleasure it can get under the circumstances. The very pace and habits of movement in animals are entirely regulated by this principle; and the stopping, running, leaping, and the thousand and one other performances observable in these creatures, all depend on it.

463. The same principle determines the sounds emitted by the various kinds of animals. As a rule, each kind has the physical power of producing several sounds; but it keeps constantly to one, whether it be a roar, or a grunt, or a hiss, or a song, or any other form or cry; it keeps to the one that costs it less labour, with an equal or a greater pleasure. And here I would

observe by the way, that the same principle is available even for explaining the multiplicity of tongues and of dialects in mankind. The organs of speech variously modified produce different sounds; and men, in virtue of the Law of the Least Means, adopt those which, relatively to them, are more spontaneous than others; although their organs could produce others equally well.

464. I should never come to an end if I were to consider in detail the habitats and the nests which different animals construct for themselves. Suffice it to say that in these constructions the Law of the Least Means is invariably maintained, and sometimes according to strict geometrical rule; as may be seen, for instance, in the famous example of the bees.

It is well known that their cells have all a perfectly hexagonal form. Now, as a matter of fact, the hexagon is, among all possible polygons, that which occupies the least space. But this is not all: these hexagonal cells terminate with a pyramidal bottom by means of the union of three rhombi similar and equal to one another. The angles which these rhombi might make when joined in the form of a pyramid are countless, and the pyramid would, of course, be acute or obtuse in exact proportion to the degrees of the angles chosen for it. But what angles do the bees constantly prefer in their work? Maraldi examined them with the greatest care, and found that the larger ones measure generally 109 degrees 28 minutes, and the smaller 70 degrees 32 minutes. Now Koenig, a distinguished mathematician, undertook to solve the following problem: "What ought to be the angles of an hexagonal cellule with a pyramidal bottom, in order

that the least possible quantity of material may be required for its construction?" As the result of his calculations he found that the larger angles of the rhombi ought to be of 109 degrees 26 minutes, and the smaller angles of 70 degrees 34 minutes. Moreover, he demonstrated that the bees, by preferring the pyramidal to a flat bottom, effect a saving in regard to that quantity of wax which would be necessary for making the flat bottom, with the further advantage of acquiring a larger and more convenient space.

The construction of the honey-comb on such nice geometrical principles is, no doubt, the necessary effect of instinct. But whence this instinct? It certainly cannot be found in the concept of sensitivity; because sensitivity, as such, is indifferent as to any particular kind of action; to act in this or that special way, it requires to be determined. What is it that determines it? It is, as we have said, the organization, namely, that suitable union of the atoms to which sensitivity together with its instinctive force adheres as to its term, and by which it allows itself to be directed and moved in sundry ways. Again, whence this collocation of atoms, which gives rise to the germ of the bee, and from the germ to its tiny body, constructed and quickened in such a way as to determine the instinct that forms the honey-comb? The cause of this does not lie in the nature of the atoms any more than in that of sensitivity; it lies, therefore, in an intelligence external to the bees, superior to and ruling all nature.

The Law of the Least Action, then, is a law belonging solely to intelligence; yet it is found invariably maintained in all the real beings forming the universe.

Consequently, the universe is directed and governed by an intelligence.

465. It is precisely from this great truth that those logical rules are derived which the most celebrated students of nature have laid down for the guidance of all who wish to understand and interpret nature aright and to discover its secrets.

Such are the two which Sir Isaac Newton expressed as follows:—

1st. "In explaining the facts of nature, more causes must not be admitted than are truly such, and at the same time sufficient to account for those facts."

2nd. "Those facts of nature which are of the same species must, as far as possible, be explained by the same causes; as for example, a stone's falling to the ground in Europe and in America, or the reflection of light on the earth and in the planets." (1)

These two rules are true simply because, as Galileo had already said before Newton, "Nature, as all agree, does not employ many things where she can do with few; she does much with little." And this is nothing but the principle of the Least Action or the Least Means, universally admitted by naturalists under various denominations, and sometimes under that of "Law of Parsimony." (2)

(1) 1° *Causas rerum naturalium non plures admitti debere, quam quæ et veræ sint et earum phænomenis explicandis sufficiunt.*

2° *Effectuum naturalium ejusdem generis eædem assignandæ sunt causæ, quatenus fieri potest, ut descensus lapidum in Europa et in America, reflexionis lucis in terra et in planetis.*

(2) John Bernoulli enunciates the principle in these words: "It is truly a wonderful thing to see how all the productions of nature take place in perfect accord with the universally admitted metaphysical canon, which

says: 'Nature does nothing in vain, always goes by the shortest road; never employs many things to do that which can be done by few'" (*Mirari satis non possumus, quod naturæ effectus conspirent semper cum generalissimo canone metaphysico, qui nobis dictat: "Naturam nihil facere frustra, semper agere per viam breviorem; quæ possunt fieri per pauca, nunquam a natura fieri per plura"*) (Oper. T. IV., p. 271).

CHAPTER IX.

THE SOLUTION OF THE OBJECTIONS PUT FORWARD IS CONTAINED IN WHAT HAS BEEN SAID ABOVE.

466. The Law of the Least Means, then, is the law of sufficient reason in so far as this law determines wisdom's mode of action. It is regularly maintained in all nature, in all real being, insensitive as well as sensitive, but has not its cause in nature itself; thus plainly showing that the real beings forming the universe are governed by an intelligence.

The Law of the Least Means becomes likewise the law of virtue when it is considered in relation with moral liberty, namely, with the love which is found in intellective being, and with will.

It follows that, if the way in which God acts in regard to men were not regulated by the Law of the Least Means, He would fail in the attribute of goodness no less than in that of wisdom. Such is the corollary to the establishing of which was directed all that has been said thus far regarding the Law of the Least Means. This corollary is of very special importance in connexion with our argument; because it is on it that we propose to take our stand in discussing the objections which we have undertaken to solve in this book.

467. The objectors say that God does not treat men with *supreme goodness:*

1st. Because He does not with certainty of effect

move the will of all men alike to moral good, as He could certainly do without destroying their liberty.

2ndly. Because He does not communicate moral good to men without at the same time obliging them to self-sacrifice, whereas the good which they would merit by sacrifice could be easily supplied by a more liberal communication on His part.

3rdly. Because He does not move the will of all men to moral good with irresistible efficacy, at least at the moment of their death, as He also could do if He chose. True, their *meritorious liberty* might thus be destroyed; but the good which could be gained by the use of this liberty might be compensated by the greatness of the good He directly communicates to them.

Obviously, these assertions suppose that the goodness of God, to be supreme, must do the three things expressed in them; and if it does not, it is not supreme. But I would ask: is this supposition true? The question is a very grave one; for if the supposition is false, the objections are nothing but castles built in the air, in fact mere exhibitions of human ignorance and human rashness. Now, after all that we have said, it is evident that, to prove that the supposition is true, one must prove that God, if He does not act in the way stated, acts in opposition to the Law of the Least Means; for this, and no other, is the law that determines the operations of wisdom and of goodness. Unless, therefore, our objectors can prove at least with some show of probability, that God by not doing as they would wish, violates this law, their objections come to naught.

Now, can such proof be given? If they think it can, I have no hesitation in saying that upon making the

attempt, they will find themselves hopelessly disappointed. Let us see.

468. It is plain, that in order to move all men to moral good with certainty of effect, God would have to do in them more than He does at present. For, now He does move some in this manner, but to others He only gives the power to reach salvation if they will, permitting at the same time that through their own fault they should be lost. To please our objectors, therefore, He must, as I have said, put forth in men a greater quantity of action than He does under the existing system.

It is likewise plain, that if God wished to dispense men from all sacrifice, and to compensate them for the moral good that they would thus lose, by directly communicating to them a corresponding increase of that same good, He would, again, have to do much more than He does now, and consequently employ a proportionately larger quantity of action.

Moreover, it is evident, that if God wished to move the will of all men generally with an efficacy so powerful as to determine it to final moral good without the forces of liberty being able to withstand that movement, He must do vastly more than He does now, that is to say, He must largely increase the quantity of the action He now puts forth in men for their advantage.

Increased quantity of action on the part of God, then, is in reality what our objectors insist upon as requisite for entitling Him to be truly called supremely good in His dealings with mankind.

469. Let us, then, for the moment, and only for the sake of argument, entertain the supposition that God,

changing as it were His mind, had decided on using, in favour of mankind, a greater amount of action than He does in the system now in force. Would it follow that this increased action must be directed to obtain precisely the three things demanded by our objectors?

It is beyond all question that whatever be the amount of action which God wishes to use, He must use it in accordance with the law of wisdom, which, as we have shown, is that of the least quantity of action or of the Least Means. To prove, therefore, that any *increase* of action which God might employ in His creatures must produce exactly the three things referred to, it would be necessary, first, to demonstrate that those things are the *best effect* or the greatest good which God could under any circumstances obtain from such increase. For, as we have seen, a quantity of action is called *least* when it is applied in such a way as to bring about the greatest result possible.

Hence the objections of our adversaries cannot begin to be of any weight until they produce an irrefragable demonstration of the truth of the following proposition :—

"The quantity of action which would be necessary for effecting the three things that have been indicated, or two of them, or one—as for example for obtaining that all men, from first to last, should be saved—could not, by any possibility be employed for a greater good than this."

This is what these objectors, if they understand the true nature of the question at issue, are bound to prove, before their objections can claim to be of any force.

470. Now, have they ever tried to bring this proof? Nay, have they ever even so much as dreamed that it

was their duty to do so? If not, as is certainly the case, then I have still the right to reply that their objections are no better than gratuitous assertions, ignorant and audacious pretensions to teach the Creator the way in which He ought to conduct Himself in His operations. To say to the Creator: "If you wish me to esteem you supremely wise and good, you must act precisely in the manner that I think right and proper," and at the same time to hold oneself dispensed from the obligation of showing why He ought to do so, is certainly a strange mode of proceeding.

471. But it is a great deal more than this. Not only have these objectors never understood what it was that they had to prove in order that their allegations, instead of being purely arbitrary, might have some claim to be called arguments; not only have they never bethought themselves of their obligation to grapple with that difficulty; but it can further be demonstrated that the difficulty is such as to transcend all the powers of human intelligence. Only the Infinite Intelligence can solve the great problem involved in it. I will explain.

472. A government presiding over a multitude of intelligent beings is as perfect as can be expected, when it obtains the greatest amount of good possible with the means at its disposal, even though evils should unavoidably happen to be mixed up with that good. This proposition I firmly believe to be true; and those who wish to see my proofs of it have only to refer to the place where I have given them in another work. (1)

(1) See *Society and its Aim* ("La Società ed il suo Fine"), Bk. iv., ch. viii.-x.

To reduce this proposition to a form suitable to our present argument, we will transform it (as mathematicians do with equations) into this other, which is perfectly the same in meaning: "A government, to be perfect, must direct its provisions in such a way that the governmental action which it employs shall obtain an amount of good which is the greatest possible, even after due allowance has been made for the evils which the same action is apt to entail, because then the end is obtained with an action which is relatively least." In order, therefore, that the sum total of good that remains after deducting the evils may be truly the greatest possible, it is not necessary that it should be distributed among a large rather than among a small number of individuals (saving always what rightfully belongs to each); all that is necessary is that its amount, after the evils have been deducted, should be the greatest possible. (1) In fact, let us suppose a case in which the quantity of action at the disposal of the government could be employed in two ways by being directed to obtain two different composite effects, each greatest in its kind. One is a sum of goods secured without the admixture of any evils whatever; and the other is a sum of goods which are accompanied with evils, in such wise, however, that upon striking the balance between the goods and the evils, there remains a net total of good of such magnitude as to form the very largest of all the totals possible. Which of the two ways will a wise government choose? Undoubtedly the second; because then its action will in truth be employed to by far the best advantage, and therefore in accordance with the

(1) *Ibid.*

law of wisdom, the Law of the Least Means applied to obtain the *maximum* of effect.

This reasoning implies that goods and evils are counterbalanced in the simplicity of the human soul, and, like two weights placed in opposite scales, neutralize each other; so that an evil compensated by a good largely outweighing it, ceases to be an evil, and man himself in this case willingly embraces that evil from love of the good that is conjoined with it. (1) To this we must add, that when there is question of a ruler who is supremely good, the interior comparison of which I speak is made by him also. For, to him also it is a source of satisfaction to produce good, as it is a source of pain to see the evils that mix themselves up with the good; hence, if he is truly such as we suppose him to be, he will unquestionably choose that mode of action which, all things considered, gives him the greatest amount of good.

Contrariwise, if a ruler had good reason to know that by producing the greatest good possible without the admixture of any evils, the sum total obtained would exceed the net sum of that which he would produce with an admixture of evils, it would unquestionably be in keeping with his perfect goodness to produce good alone, to the exclusion of all evil.

473. If these principles are applied to God's government of His intelligent creatures, it will be readily seen what a difficult thesis our adversaries are bound to maintain in order that their objections may have force. For their contention is that God ought to save all men, and, moreover, ought to free them

(1) This also I have demonstrated in the place quoted above.

from all evils. Now, according to what we have said, this would not show Him to be supremely good, unless it were true that, by saving all men, or freeing them from all evils, He obtained an absolute *maximum* of good relatively to the *quantity of action* or of *the means* employed by Him—in other words, a sum total of good larger than He could obtain by permitting that some men should be lost, or that they should suffer some evils. The objectors must, therefore, prove that the thing is so, namely, they must prove that the fresh quantity of action which they want Him to put forth in accomplishing their object could not be spent more advantageously; or, what is the same thing, they must prove that the said fresh quantity of action would, by being directed to prevent the said evils, produce a good absolutely greater than it would by being employed in producing other goods, though mixed with evils.

Indeed, is it quite clear that, in case God were to decide on employing that fresh quantity of action which is demanded of Him, He could not draw from it a good greater than the salvation of all men, or the freeing of all from pain? Could He not, for example, by the same quantity of action applied according to the law of wisdom, multiply the number of intelligent natures, and thus bring about a good beyond all calculation? Who can say, who can demonstrate with certainty, that the same increase of action could not, through another combination of circumstances, be made to produce a good incomparably greater than the evil which it is desired to eliminate? What man, what angel will be able to grapple with a problem like this? Would not the solution of it require beforehand what it would be an absurdity to expect from any

finite intelligence, a thorough knowledge of all the ways in which God could apply and utilize that quantity of action? Is it not, then, a proof of gross ignorance, an unpardonable temerity, to demand of God: 1st. that He should employ in the government of His creatures a greater quantity of action than He does, and 2ndly. that He should employ it, not in the way that His wisdom directs, but in the way that seems good in our eyes?

Of a certainty, when we allow ourselves to be so impressed by the sight of human evils that we would forthwith have them banished from off the face of the earth, we act blindly; we think of only one thing; we do not consider that the quantity of action which would suffice to remove those evils might perhaps be differently used, and in the hands of God yield an amount of good which, although accompanied with evils, would, upon striking the balance, be found infinitely to preponderate.

It is, therefore, a mere illusion to affirm that God, to be supremely good, ought to permit no evil; it is a prejudice, a gratuitous proposition neither proved, nor, as we have just shown, capable of proof. Our objectors have not the faintest notion of this. Carried away by their feelings, they take no time for sober reflection, and a mistaken pronouncement is the consequence.

Certainly, the Law of the Least Action does not include the condition that "the quantity of action employed by a wise being must produce good alone, unmixed with evils." The only thing which this law determines is, that, "the quantity of action employed by a wise being must produce an effect which, after due allowance is made for any evils that may accompany it, shall still

prove the best among all the effects that are possible." But the mode in which wisdom as well as goodness operates is guided by nothing else than the Law of the Least Action. Therefore, the condition which it is pretended to impose on God does not belong to the law of wisdom and of goodness. Therefore, it is not true that God, in order to show Himself perfectly wise and good, must follow that condition. Therefore, the fact of evils mixing themselves up with His works, gives us no right to conclude that He is any the less wise and good on that account.

474. Nor is this all. By imposing on Divine Wisdom a condition not beseeming it, our adversaries, in reality, aim at the destruction of that very Wisdom. For, how can that be wisdom, which operates according to laws at variance with the law of wisdom, and therefore foolishly? Hence, when they complain of God, they in reality find fault with Him for not being, like themselves, deluded by folly. Such is the true outcome of those objections which, to human shortsightedness, seem at first to present so grave and serious an appearance.

475. A problem cannot be solved aright unless it be cleared of all the conditions that have nothing to do with its nature. The problem of wisdom is this: "What is the greatest good that can be obtained by a given quantity of action?" Our objectors insist on adding to it the condition that "the greatest good must have no evil conjoined with it;" and thus by an arbitrary *ipse dixit* they render the solution of the problem of wisdom impossible. For the problem of wisdom they substitute one that is altogether different and very much more restricted. But God, Who by His very

essence is guided in His operations by wisdom, will assuredly not heed their criticisms, and will continue to act in a manner worthy of Himself.

476. This Divine mode of action shows us in fact that the great problem of wisdom, with whose arduousness only the Infinite Mind can cope, is solved by God thus: "A given quantity of action obtains a larger sum of net good by permitting the admixture of some evil, than it would yield if no evils were permitted." This is a comment on the famous words of St. Augustine: *Deus satius duxit de malis bona facere, quam nulla mala esse permittere* ("God judged it a better thing to draw good out of evils than not to permit any evils at all"). (1)

(1) Although I could not endorse the *Optimist Theory* in the general way in which Leibnitz has expressed it, nevertheless I think I may venture to say, that if one were to imagine all the possible worlds in which the quantity of action employed for the attainment of good was not the least possible, every one of these worlds would be set aside by Divine Wisdom in favour of that wherein good would be secured by the least quantity of action. The reason is that this is essentially wisdom's law of action. Hence that world in which this law is observed is *better* than all those in which it is not observed; because "The works of God are perfect" (Deuteron. xxxii. 4). We may therefore apply here Valla's Dialogue on Divine Providence, continued with such nice discrimination by Leibnitz. To be brief, I shall give it in the words in which Fontenelle in his eulogy of Leibnitz summarises it: "There is a dialogue by Lorenzo Valla, in which this author, by a fiction, represents Sextus, the son of Tarquinius the Proud, as going to Delphi to consult the oracle on his destiny. Apollo predicts to him that he will violate Lucretia. Sextus complains of that prediction. Apollo replies that he has no fault in the matter, inasmuch as he is merely the augur; that every thing had been arranged by Jupiter, to whom, therefore, all complaints should be made. With this the dialogue ends; and we may see by it that Valla saves the prescience of God at the expense of His Goodness. Not so Leibnitz. He continues Valla's fiction in accordance with his own system. Sextus goes to Dodona, and complains to Jupiter on account of the crime to which he is destined. Jupiter answers him that all he has to do is not to go to Rome; Sextus, however, openly declares that

he will not renounce the hope of obtaining the kingdom, and he departs. Then Theodore, the High Priest, asks Jupiter why he has not given to Sextus a different will. Jupiter sends Theodore to Athens to consult Minerva. She introduces him into the palace of destinies, where there are to be seen, designed on the walls, all the possible universes from the worst to the best. In this last, Theodore finds the crime of Sextus, and, springing from it, the liberty of Rome, a government prolific of virtues, an empire that will greatly benefit a vast portion of the human race; whereupon Theodore has not one word more to say."

If, instead of saying, as in the dialogue, that the universes designed on the walls in the palace of destinies were "the worst and the best," we say that they were "those in which the Law of the Least Means is not maintained," and "those in which it is maintained," and that the crime of Sextus, or other crimes, were found in the latter, then the fiction will answer admirably as an illustration of my thought. Only it must be remembered that the going or not going to Rome depended on the *free-will* of Sextus. His crime, therefore, was attributable to himself, not willed by Jupiter, but permitted because of the greater good that would ensue from it.

CHAPTER X.

ANSWER TO THE ALLEGATION THAT "FOR GOD TO DO MORE OR TO DO LESS IS ALL THE SAME; FOR NEITHER COSTS HIM ANYTHING."

477. The objections raised by our opponents, then, are in reality indications of a superficial mind, and, when carefully examined, vanish into nothing.

As, however, we find ourselves dealing with objections which the vulgar raise against Divine Providence by consulting, not the reasons intrinsic to good government, but their own desires and subjective affections, we will stop to meet another of these objections, which is quite as shallow as those we have indicated.

It is often said: It costs God nothing to employ in favour of His creatures any quantity of action He pleases. With Him there is no question of more or of less; for He has no need to economize force. Even if He were to expend such quantity of action as could, by being used in another way, obtain a greater good, it would not follow from this, that that greater good need be lost. For, He could, if He chose, obtain it by adding another quantity of action sufficient to produce it. But could not this second quantity of action also be utilized for producing a still greater good?—yes, it is replied; but this good also could be obtained by a third increase of action.—And what do you say of the

possibility of this new increase of action producing a yet greater good by being differently employed?—We grant this possibility, is again the reply; still you must not forget that that same good could be obtained by a further increase of action, and so *ad infinitum;* because God is infinite, and His action has no assignable limits.

478. This reasoning, if the reader reflects, is like the suggestion made to the Duke of Urbino when the excavations for the foundations of his magnificent palace were being proceeded with. Castiglione relates that there was some difficulty in disposing of the earth dug out of those excavations, and that one of the courtiers advised the Duke to have a large hole dug for the purpose. Upon the Duke's asking how they were to dispose of the material that would be displaced by the making of the hole, that sage gentleman replied that the hole should be made larger so as to hold all. The Duke tried to explain to him that this would not mend matters, because a larger hole would imply a larger quantity of material thrown up, and therefore the necessity of finding more room in which to deposit it; but all in vain. The courtier still went on insisting that the hole should be made larger and larger until it should hold all the earth they required to dispose of; and nothing the Duke and the bystanders could say had any effect in bringing him to see the hallucination under which he was labouring.

479. But to answer the objection directly, I will say that it contains two errors, indeed two absurdities.

The first is, that if the Law of the Least Action is, as I have demonstrated, essentially the law of wisdom, to pretend that God should abandon it and follow a different law, is the same as to require that He should

act foolishly. The thought of God abandoning in His works the Law of the Least Action could only be entertained by persons who do not understand this law, who do not see that it constitutes intelligence itself, and at the same time do not realize to themselves the fact that, in the eyes of a supremely good ruler, evils are no evils when they produce a good far outweighing them in the balance, even as in the thermometer the degrees of cold would be neutralized if they were the means of producing an increased intensity of heat.

480. The second error and absurdity contained in the objection now before us lies in the supposition that God can produce an infinite quantity of action outside Himself. I say *outside Himself*, because the quantity of action which we are speaking of here, is that produced by Him in the universe, which may be considered as an aggregate of means and of ends. The ends are the good produced, namely, the complex and final sum of moral-eudemonological good. The means are all the entities and the actions directed to that production. The Law of the Least quantity of Action obtains when the sum of the means is the least that could be used relatively to the sum of the ends, or *vice versa*, when the sum of the ends is the greatest that could be relatively to that of the means used. Now, neither the one nor the other of these two sums can ever be infinite, although God Who produces them is infinite.

481. But it is urged: If the Goodness of God is, as it must be, infinite, will it not naturally wish to diffuse itself infinitely? And if it wishes to diffuse itself infinitely, why not produce infinite beings, in which it would find no limits whatever? Would not a refusal

to acknowledge this power in God, amount to a limiting of His Omnipotence?

I answer that it would not; for it is not limiting God's Omnipotence to say that He cannot do absurdities. Absurdities have no place in the great ocean of being.

Now, if it is maintained that the finite beings to be created by God ought to have been infinite in *number*, the absurdity would be manifest. An infinite number is a contradiction in terms; since every number must necessarily be determinate, and consequently susceptible of addition or increase. On the other hand, each of these beings must always remain finite, that is to say, limited to a certain quantity of good; and likewise the means that would have to be employed for leading it to the good of which it is capable, must be limited as to quantity.

482. If it is further maintained that each created being, in order that God might exhibit an infinite goodness towards it, must be infinite in its *nature*, then we have another absurdity not less glaring than the first. Plurality of beings, and infinity, present two mutually contradictory concepts; hence there can be only one infinite; and that is God Himself. His Goodness is indeed diffused and displayed infinitely, but only within Himself, by those mysterious operations whereby He subsists in three Persons. But if the Goodness of God extends infinitely within Himself, who is to hinder it from diffusing itself also in the creation of finite beings, by communicating to them such good as they are capable of? Would not the denial of this power in God be a limiting of His Goodness on the plea that it is illimitable? Grant that

the action of this Goodness supposes first of all an infinite object, and if I may say so, an infinite production. This, we have just said, is found in the Generation of the Eternal Word and in the Procession of the Holy Spirit. But after this, seeing that finite beings also, capable of a limited measure of good, are possible, on what ground can God be forbidden to create them? Are they, then, evil things? or rather, is not each of them good, though limited?

483. On the other hand, no limited being (and therefore not even our objectors) will ever put forward such an objection, if he really knows what it means; for there is no created being endowed with understanding who does not love his own existence, and all the good it is capable of, and who does not consider the one as well as the other as a signal benefit of the goodness of God.

484. Now, since it is not only not repugnant, but supremely in harmony with the nature of the Divine Goodness, that besides displaying itself infinitely within the Infinite Being, that goodness should also exhibit itself in finite beings by creating them and enriching them with the endowments of which they are capable; it plainly follows that no further room is left for objections which one might be disposed to raise concerning the greatness of these beings. For, what human intelligence will pretend to be able to fix the exact measure of that greatness, so that God could not choose another either above or below it? Is not the very thought of such a pretension ridiculous? And then, be the measure fixed by man what it may, it will always remain finite, and hence infinitely distant from infinity. The quantity of real entity to be given to creatures

cannot, therefore, be determined simply by reference to the concept of *Divine Goodness;* its determination must be allowed to rest entirely with *God's free-will*, or at least one must find some other way of explaining it. (1)

485. In creation, then, however its interminable expanse may exceed all human imagination, there can only exist a finite quantity of real entity; beings limited in nature, in greatness, in number, have *limited ends*, and *means* likewise *limited.*

Accordingly, although the Divine Goodness is in itself unlimited, nevertheless, when it produces contingent being, it becomes subject to a kind of limitation, not in itself, but belonging necessarily to the effect produced by it. For, the capacity of good, in finite being, is finite. (2)

486. It only remains, therefore, that the Divine goodness should diffuse itself as far as is consistent with the capacity of created being, observing in this also the law of wisdom. Let us see what is the extent of the capacity of intellective moral created being, whose good alone can be the aim of creation (423).

(1) I do not by this intend to deny that it would be possible to introduce here one of the most elevated questions that could be asked, namely: "Whether the goodness of God, which, because infinite, certainly tends to produce the greatest good, when considered in relation to the finite beings that are possible, contains in itself any principle of congruity of a kind to determine in some way the greatness and the number of created beings." It is not, however, necessary for me to enter into so deep a question here, as my argument remains complete and perfectly conclusive apart from it. I shall therefore, reserve it for treatment in the *Cosmology.*

(2) The capacity of finite being is finite in this sense, that, whatever gift may be bestowed upon this kind of being, it can only be bestowed in a finite measure.

487. The intellective-moral being, man for example, is so constituted, that on the one hand, as we have seen, he partakes of the infinite, namely, in so far as he has the intuition of ideal being; and on the other, he possesses reality in a finite measure; and hence, as a real being, he is finite. The fact of his reaching unto the infinite in the sphere of ideality makes him capable of an infinite *extrinsic end.* Accordingly, God, Whose goodness has no bounds, has ordained His intelligent creatures to the fruition of Himself; and under this aspect it is said with truth that the blessed in heaven, who have obtained their great end, see all the entire Essence of God. But as all created real beings are finite, so they never can have the reality of God communicated to them entirely. Hence it is also very justly said that the blessed in heaven see all God, but not all that He is *(totum sed non totaliter);* and again, that they see God, but do not *comprehend* Him: and of God it is said that He is incomprehensible, and that He dwells in light inaccessible.

488. Nor would it be of any avail to reply that God, in communicating His reality to intellective beings, neither confounds nor identifies Himself with them, but always remains outside them. For, not only are the faculties and forces of a finite real being finite, but it is also necessary that the objects, in so far as they adapt themselves to the act of those faculties, become in a certain way finite. Hence, it is an absurdity, a contradiction in terms, to imagine an act of a finite real being arriving at the perception of God in His totality. To explain this by a simile, though very far from adequate, we will suppose a man's hand touching a body immensely larger than itself, the earth for example.

The hand cannot cover in this body any more space than corresponds to the extent of its own surface. Now, if the globe of the earth could have such unity and simplicity that no division could be conceived in it, we might then say that the hand touches the whole earth, but not all of it.

489. From this it follows that, assuming that God has proposed to enrich an intelligent creature with His gifts, it is in conformity with His infinite goodness that He should give that creature, for its extrinsic end, the infinite good, namely, His own reality, because it is capable of receiving so great a gift. But if it be asked in what measure He can communicate to it His own reality, the reply must be: "in a limited measure."

490. If it were further desired to investigate to what extent the greatness of this measure may be increased, we would leave the inquirer to choose the answer which seems to him best: whether he thinks he can determine in some way its extreme limit, or prefers to say with St. Thomas that it may always be indefinitely increased, provided it always remains finite. Both answers would serve our present purpose equally well, because both bring us to the same conclusion, namely, that the real good which God can communicate to a finite being must always be limited in quantity.

491. It is true that if we hold that the said measure may be *indefinitely* (1) increased, there no longer remains any sufficient reason to determine its quantity; since in that case God might choose equally well a given measure or a larger. This choice would then depend

(1) An indefinite quantity means a quantity which can always be increased without ever becoming actually infinite.

entirely on His liberty, whose act would thus constitute its sole sufficient reason. And although this follows from the things said above, yet it may be better seen by arguing thus. Suppose that God had determined upon a certain measure of good to be distributed among His creatures; could it be affirmed that He ought to have chosen a larger measure, say twice as large? Certainly not; because if it were twice as large it might be still doubled, and then doubled again, and so on indefinitely, without ever reaching infinity. There are therefore only two alternatives between which to choose: either the good which God destines for His creatures must be infinite, or else it must be limited to a finite quantity. The first alternative is absurd; therefore only the second remains. But every finite quantity, increase it as you may, never approaches infinity; because the finite is always infinitely distant from the infinite. Therefore the action of prescribing to the goodness of God one measure rather than another is preposterous. If there were a reason for demanding one increase, there would be exactly the same reason for demanding a second, and then a third, and a fourth, and we should never come to the end; hence we should never be able to determine a measure, which nevertheless must necessarily be determinate.

It remains manifest, therefore, in every system, that, whether there be a sufficient reason to determine by way of congruity the measure of the good which God has to distribute among His creatures, or whether this determination depend purely on an act of His free-will, it is always equally certain that the good destined for His creatures must be of a limited quantity.

492. The direct consequence of this is, that the

quantity of action which God employs in producing the said good cannot be infinite; it must be limited.(1)

493. But the law of wisdom requires that this quantity of action, whatever it may happen to be, should be the least possible relatively to its effect, or that its effect should be the greatest possible relatively to the quantity of action. Therefore, supposing that God, in surveying, so to speak, all the effects obtainable by that quantity of action variously employed, were to find that the one containing the greatest complex good would be that which consists, not of goods alone, but of goods mixed with evils and often occasioned by them; we should be bound to say that it would be in accordance with His infinite wisdom to prefer the latter, because this would in reality give what His goodness invariably aims at—the *maximum* of good.

494. If, then, in the idea of the universe which served as exemplar to the creative power, God saw that the sins committed by men, and the ruin of those

(1) St. Thomas touches in many places upon the question "Whether God does that which is *best;*" and he distinguishes between a *material* and a *formal best.* He excludes the first, which in truth is no best at all, but he admits the second. In one place he proposes the following objection: "Nature always does that which is best, and God much more so. But it would be better if there were many worlds than if there were one only; because many good things are worth more than a few good things." And he answers thus:—"No wise operator aims at material plurality as his end; because material plurality has no fixed limit, but tends by its nature to the indefinite. Now, the indefinite is repugnant with the notion of end. But when we say that many worlds are better than one, we speak according to material multitude. This kind of best does not belong to the intention of God operating; because, if He had made two worlds, we might with the same reason say that He ought to have made three; and so on indefinitely" (S. p. I., q. XLVII., art. III., ad 2m). From this we can infer that the Angelic Doctor admits the *formal best* as belonging to the end which God proposes to Himself.

who are lost, were evils necessary for obtaining the greatest good possible by means of the least action possible, He could not have prevented such without deviating from the law of wisdom and goodness, from which laws He cannot deviate in His works, because He is essentially Wisdom and Goodness itself.

495. Now, what we have said above shows that the thing might have been so; and no human intelligence can prove the contrary. Therefore our objectors have not shown why the sins committed by men and the loss of the reprobate, although they might have been prevented by God's power, should be deemed repugnant with the concept of His wisdom and goodness. Therefore their objections have no weight whatever, but are simply prejudices of ignorant temerity.

CHAPTER XI.

POSITIVE ARGUMENTS, TENDING TO SHOW THAT THE MORAL AND EUDEMONOLOGICAL EVILS WHICH OCCUR IN THE UNIVERSE, FAR FROM MILITATING AGAINST THE WISDOM AND GOODNESS OF GOD, ARE A PROOF OF THEM.—PRELIMINARY NOTIONS ON THE WAY OF MEASURING THE QUANTITY OF ACTION IN ORDER TO ASCERTAIN IF IT BE THE LEAST POSSIBLE.

496. No one is justified in saying that the sins to which men are subject, and the consequent loss of the reprobate, evince a want of goodness on the part of God, Who does not prevent them although He could do so; because it lies altogether beyond the power of human intelligence to prove that those evils could be removed from the world without a violation of the law of wisdom, which is that of the Least quantity of Action. And this suffices for vindicating Divine Providence.

But if it is impossible for our opponents to prove that the evils in question are not necessary, to the end that the universe may be formed and governed by the least quantity of action, will it be impossible for us to prove the direct contrary, namely, that the said evils are so necessary, that, without them, the Law of the Least Action—an essential condition of Infinite Goodness and Wisdom—could not be maintained? I think not. And even if the proofs that are within our reach had no other force than that of probable

conjecture, it would still be a consoling and useful labour to collect them together: for, although they are not necessary for vindicating Infinite Goodness, they nevertheless help the mind of man to raise itself up to it, and they strengthen his faith and trust in the Creator and Preserver of all things.

I will, therefore, begin here to set forth this surplusage of proofs, if it may be so called, and I venture to hope that intelligent readers will in the end find them to be much more than conjectural—indeed, to be rigorously demonstrative. But since the field upon which I make bold to enter yields an inexhaustible harvest, I only propose to gather some few sheaves, as it were, feeling certain as I do that, even if we were to garner a far larger store, there would still remain very much more for others to reap.

497. To demonstrate, therefore, that the very evils of the present as well as of the future life, far from being any reason for our thinking disparagingly of the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, are a powerful motive for our magnifying it all the more, we must first of all investigate how the quantity of action may be measured, and then prove that this quantity, to be the least, must admit of evils.

498. In this investigation it is necessary to proceed with the utmost clearness of ideas, owing to the subtlety of the point at issue, and the consequent danger of the reasoning going astray, unless the terms which are used in it be very clear and precise. As a means to this, I will premise a few considerations on the proper way of measuring the quantity of action in general. Afterwards I will define exactly what that quantity is which forms the object of the problem in hand.

499. I. In the first place, it must be borne in mind that the quantity of action here spoken of is relative to the effect to be produced by it; in other words, that action is called *least*, in reference to the end which it is sought to obtain, and not as considered in itself.

500. II. In the second place, since the ends which it is intended to obtain may be very many, it is plain that the rule which is employed in measuring the quantity of action relatively to one end, cannot be equally available for measuring the quantity of action relatively to another end. For instance:—

a. If the end which it is sought to obtain were merely the moving of a body to a certain distance, then, given the velocity, the least action would be represented by the straight line; or, in general, given that a body is wanted to pass from one place to another by the shortest road, the straight line is the one that will require the least action. It is the principle of Ptolemy, the theory of the *shortest way*, which obtains in Optics and Catoptrics. The reason is, that in this case, the space traversed is the *means* employed for obtaining the end in view; and it is the means that must be economized when one wishes to produce an effect by the least quantity of action. Hence the action is here said to be least, solely in relation to the space saved. The shortest way, then, taken as indicating the least action, has reference to the *saving of space*.

b. If, on the other hand, not space, but *time* were considered as the means of obtaining a given end, then it is obvious that that quantity of action would be least which was produced in the shortest time possible. In that case, therefore, the *saving of time* would have to be aimed at. From this principle, applied to the

motion of bodies, it follows that, for the least action, one ought to calculate, besides the shortness of the distance, the velocity of the motion; because the quicker a body moves, the sooner it arrives at its destination.

c. But if, instead of space or time, *force* is considered as the means, and consequently the *saving of force* is the object sought; then we shall have to say that a less quantity of action is employed in moving a body, when an increased velocity is obtained by the same amount of force. Hence in this case also it comes to pass that the quantity of action is in inverse ratio to the velocity. And since, if the living force, and the mass of the body to which it is applied, are given, the velocity resulting therefrom is greater in proportion as the obstacles which the body finds in its way are less, as happens with bodies descending by a cycloidal curve; we have here Leibnitz's principle of the *easiest way*.

d. From this we may infer that, under these two aspects, the increased velocity does not constitute an increased quantity of action (as was maintained in general by Maupertuis), unless on condition that the velocity be itself proposed as an end to be gained, or in other words, that it be considered as the *means* of producing another effect. In that case, if the same effect can be produced in the same time by the same movements made with less velocity, there will be a diminished quantity of action, for the very reason that there is a *saving of velocity*. Euler (1) applied this principle, combined with that of the saving of space, to the tra-

(1) See *Mémoires de l'Académie de Berlin*, vol. vii., nn. 1750, 1751; also Euler's work on the problem *De Maximis et Minimis*.

jectories that are described by means of central forces; and he demonstrated that the velocity multiplied by the element of the curve is always a *minimum.* Lagrange extended the same principle to all systems of bodies subject to the laws of attraction, and acting in any way one upon another.

e. Let us now suppose that *uniformity of motion* is the effect sought to be produced. In this case, the nearer the motion obtained approaches to uniformity, the greater is the effect, which therefore will have reached its *maximum* when the uniformity is perfect. Consequently, the quantity of action will be the least, if the means which are used for transforming an irregular continuous motion into a uniform motion, are the simplest possible. This is the problem of the time-piece, namely: "How to convert the accelerated motion of a weight, or of an expanding spring, into the uniform motion of the hands of the time-piece." The *maximum* of velocity, or of the space traversed, etc., forms no part of the question here. The *simplicity of the means invented for obtaining uniform motion*, constitutes therefore the perfection of the time-piece.

f. But if the effect to be produced is simply the formation, with a given quantity of material, of a utensil, an instrument, or such like, so that the material is considered as the means; then the saving will regard the material itself; and it will be true to say that the quantity of action is least, when the said formation is accomplished with the *minimum of material.* This reminds me of the principle of Koenig, who, as we have seen (464), found that the bees in the construction of their hives adopt a form which requires the least amount of wax possible.

501. III. On the other hand, it is needless to say, that if the effect which has to be produced is not simple but complex, that is to say, made up of several effects together, it is not always possible to obtain that *saving of means* which can be obtained when one effect alone is sought. In this case, the *maximum* of effect will consist in the compound result of the various effects desired, and there will be the *minimum* of action when the means employed are, taken together, the fewest and the simplest possible. We will take an example from muscular mechanics:—

The mechanism of the human body was formed by nature in such a manner that its movements might be very great and at the same time very rapid, produced by the smallest expenditure of force. Here, then, there was no question of saving either space or velocity. Space and velocity stood, not as *means*, but as *effect*, which had to be relatively the greatest. *Force* was, therefore, the thing to be economized. Now, the muscles and the bones constitute, for the most part, levers of the third kind. (1) In this kind of lever the power acts without any loss, and therefore with the greatest effect when it is applied in a normal direction; but when it is applied obliquely, it is resolved, and that part of it which is not normal is lost. Now, the power of the muscles, applied to the bones, acts on them in an almost normal direction, because the muscles which contract in the action are attached to the bones just underneath their enlargement at the extremities. Thus a *saving of force* is obtained. But after

(1) By "lever of the third kind," mechanicians mean that lever which has the fulcrum at one extremity, the resistance at the other extremity, and, between the two, the power which is applied to set it in motion.

this, if we consider that the arm of the resistance is much longer than that of the power, we at once see that for the motion which it is sought to obtain, more force is required than if the arm of the resistance were shorter. Wherefore this? Because the wisdom of the Creator intended to obtain a motion which should, as we have said, be at once very great and very rapid; and this it could not obtain without the employment of increased power. Thus it comes to pass, that if when I stretch forth my right arm the part in which the muscle is inserted is displaced, let us say three inches per second, the other extremity of the arm recedes from its position with a velocity of some three feet per second. Why so? Because the arm of the resistance is twelve times as long as that of the power. It was, therefore, impossible to save here as much force as might have been saved if the effect sought had been merely to set the lever in motion, and there had been no intention of rendering its movements at once great and rapid. The quantity of the total effect aimed at being larger, the expenditure of a correspondingly larger force became indispensable for obtaining it.

502. IV. Lastly, it may happen that the effect to be obtained is one and simple, but that the means employed cannot be otherwise than many; and they must all work together, for the reason that one could not be left to act by itself alone, without interfering with the action of another.

In this case, in order that the effect may be the greatest possible, it will again be necessary to sacrifice a portion of the action of the means taken singly. For instance, to take a problem from Political Economy, "How to make the duty laid upon a given kind of

imported goods, yield the largest profit to the State." Here two means offer themselves: the one is to raise the duty, and the other to increase the importation and consumption of the goods in question. But it is clear that if the duty is excessively high, the importation and consumption will diminish in the same proportion. And if the duty is excessively low, the public revenue will have very little benefit from it. Neither of these means, therefore, can be had recourse to, without lessening to a greater or less extent the efficacy of the other. The *maximum* of the effect intended will have been attained, when the duty is reduced to that limit which will result in the importation and consumption being large enough to compensate with advantage for the loss caused by the reduction.

Another example. There is question of fixing the beacon in a lighthouse. Whether you place it high, or place it low, part of its illuminating power is certain to be lost, in the first case in the ratio of the elevation, and in the second case in the ratio of the obliquity of the rays. Perfection will have been reached when the altitude is so nicely adjusted that the diminished obliquity of the rays compensates advantageously for the light which is lost in consequence of the increased elevation. In most of the problems of *maxima* and *minima* there is seen this opposition in the relative efficacy of the means employed, and this because of that limitation which we have said is inherent in all finite things.

503. Now, from all these examples we may see how the principle of the Least quantity of Action may be reduced to another and more general formula, and so precise as to preclude the possibility of all further

questions as to the rule which ought to be followed in determining the least *quantity* of *action* in every case of the general problem. It is this: "In seeking to obtain the effect which you desire, use the least means possible:" which, of course, implies that, relatively to the means, the effect is as great as it can be. Thus the principle of the Least quantity of Action is converted into the *principle of the Least Means;* and it is under this formula that we shall continue to speak of it hereafter.

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